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Autumn Leaves

By MORY BERMAN



Translated by ALFRED G. SANFTLEBEN

Published by the Author

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Address Mory Berman
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Los Angeles, Cal.

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A Word of Cheer

December 27th, 1921.

Mr. Mory Berman,
4221 Eastside Boulevard,
Los Angeles, Cal.

Dear Mory:—

I write you this to express my deep appreciation of the pleasure in reading your story entitled "AUTUMN LEAVES," truly a work of art and expressive of the life and experiences of the writer.

You have here touched upon the sublime in photoplay art and it will take the combined ability of a director versed in the art of the present drama and that of seeing things as they really exist.

Unhappily there are today few that are able to grasp the deep thoughts you have achieved. You have gone beyond the best of us in portraying "life as it really is."

You have here a drama of a master mind and the writer awaits with anticipation the man or set of men that will produce this drama which will go down to posterity as the "film supreme."

"AUTUMN LEAVES" is truly a master piece and I predict that it will some day be heralded to the world as a super production.

Very sincerely yours,
(Signed) ELMER N. WORKMAN,
Scenario Editor.

The curtain opens to our recital of incidents in Russia of old, in the year of 1890, and we see revealed before our eyes the following:

A willow basket swings to and fro, suspended on a rope drawn through one of the beams supporting the roof of the house. The basket is also in an up-and-down motion, and looking into it we perceive the cause in a pair of twins, already in a struggle, it seems, with the grim world into which a cruel fate has thrown them, unasked.

Not far from the primitive cradle an overturned table. Next to it a samovar, turned upside down, with some still smoking embers. In a little distance broken dishes, scattered knives and forks, a pitcher with milk, a broken glass-dish with remnants of butter from which a famished black cat is furtively eating. Rolled a little farther off a large round loaf of black bread, partly cut.

To the right of the door opening to the narrow street a shapeless mass, vaguely betraying a human body, face downward, surrounded by pieces of broken furniture. Across the back of the inert body the broken, heavy, wooden leg of a bed.

The half open door admits the dim light of a late afternoon that bathes all visible and indiscernable things in vague gray shadows.

Farther in the back, half tumbled over, a bed standing on three legs, its contents upturned as if gripped by a storm, and from under it, partly protruding, a woman's body. To the right of the bed a brick-stove with open door through which a thin whisp of smoke is blown into the room. To the left of the bed a door leads into a second room, but one look into it is bound to kill in us for ever our peace of mind, and to destroy for all times our faith in all things and beings!

* * *

A large shape, cloaked in black, approaches through the door from the street, looks about, furtively enters the room, and, stepping over the prostrate body, walks decisively up to the suspended cradle.

The tall shadow bends over it. Two fat arms of a woman with greedy fingers reach from under the cloak, stop for a moment, undecided as to the choice between boy and girl; then grasp quick one of the quivering bodies, hiding it in the folds of the cloak; and the gaunt shadow passes out again into the twilight.

The half-starved cat is undisturbed and still greedily busy over the cracked butter-dish.

* * *

The wings of the darkening night cover all things from vision until a light appears, at the entrance from the little street, emanating from a lantern in the hands of a tall, raw-boned man dressed in a much-worn army-overcoat. In the flickering light we barely are able to discern the dim outlines of the head with a fur cap, dark caverns of the eyes, and a long black beard. With a kick of his heavy boots the new ar-

rival flings back the door to admit his burly form. With uplifted lantern he enters and takes no other notice of the body than to shove it wide out of his way with another kick, spitting quite unconcerned.

In the middle of the room he halts, lifts up the lantern to the level of his eyes, carefully examining everything around him. A wail comes from the lone child in the cradle, frightened by the flickering flame of the lantern; and at the same moment the cat is heard also, disturbed in her hasty meal.

The visitor steps quick up to the swinging cradle, bends over the tiny mite of humanity, and exclaims: "O Jesus! That is too much; they should not go so far!" After crossing himself he adds: "Come with me, you little worm"; and with his clumsy fingers lifting the child by its diaper, like a little kitten, he walks out of the room.

* * *

Grisa Fedorowich, a wood-chopper, tall, with a bent back, a thin beard and long eagle-beak of a nose, and small gray cat-eyes. For the thin beard and prominent nose he has to thank his wife. There he is, almost entirely arms and legs connected by the mis-shapen torso of a gorilla. A coward when his beloved wife rolls up her sleeves, ready to grab him by the nape of his neck.

These two noble creatures inhabit a dilapidated house in the foul ghetto of K——. This "palatial" residence is barely visible, because walled-in on all sides by piles of stacked-up kindling-wood, and fencing—"night work!" His excellency, Grisa Fedorowich, is stretched out, in his clothes, on top of the large tile-stove, and smokes his pipe. The room is large; there is a broken table with an oil lamp on it; a large wooden bed, filled with straw, upon which a goat is chewing her cud. Upon the stone-floor roam some chickens, ducks, and two white geese. The balance of the furniture is of a corresponding character.

Every time our worthy Grisa spits from his high perch upon the stone-floor the chickens hurry to the spot, and he lifts up his head, calling out in disgust: "Akh! crazy chickens, always hungry! You'll eat up the hair of my head; but eggs there are none. They seem to be frozen out. Oh you parasites, phew." and he spits again.

Then turning about, and casting an eager look upon the door he exclaims: "And where is my Matka?" his face expressing impatient expectancy. A sound from outside of the door draws his attention and he looks in that direction with the intentness of a dog waiting for his master.

The rather low door opens, and in bends the tall, dark frame of the woman, whom Grisa greets with the words: "Look out for your little head!" "Shut your mouth, you monkey," she retorts, and continues: "You better step down from your roost and help me to get off this cape."

Groaning he slowly obeys the command, and helps her to unwrap. In so doing he sighs: "Akh, Matka, you grow taller

all the time, like a tower, and I am drying-up ever more." "Grisa, quicker, or I"—her voice rises, and he falls in: "I will alright, alright," and his hastening fingers untie the cord of the pelerine, unveiling in their full majesty the 250 pounds of the woman's massive body, with the little babe in her arms.

Grisa crosses himself of a sudden and asks: "What is that, Matka?" "That is a child, you idiot! Take it!" She places the little body in his arms. "I have found it, and we are going to bring it up."

He rocks the baby awkwardly in his arms, while she drops herself into a seat, short of breath, her bosom heaving vehemently, like the billows of a stormy sea.

"Did you make borsht ready, Grisa?" He does not answer. "Muzhik!" she shouts, "how about the borsht?" But Grisa seems lost in thought, and big tears trickle down his cheeks, glistening like pearls in the scant beard, all unbeknown to himself.

At this her head sinks down to her bosom, and each one is absorbed in the own inner soul-chambers of silence.

* * *

Nicolai Ivanich, or, as the neighbors prefer, Nicolai Pianicha, i. e. "drunkard," a basket-weaver, lives in a cellar. The only window, on the level with the yard, faces upon a splendor of piles of manure, bones, hoops, and bottles, but not a single flower. The floor is of baked loam. Walls and ceiling are damp and dark. In the rear of the room indefinite objects loom out of the darkness.

The work-bench stands by the window, upon it bundles of willow-rods, and a bottle of brandy; and where the brandy is, is also his life-companion in peace and war. Who of the two drinks more is hard to tell; all that is sure is that both of them drink. For this reason she makes baskets, purchases brandy, quarrels with the neighbors, and tries to rub out of her abdomen the cramp-pains, caused either by too much drink, or by recently acquired blows of matrimony. She is of medium height, with a fat, greasy face.

But Nicolai has also his good sides. For the rest they are devout people who go to church on Sundays. On the way back from church they are joined by friends, and near-friends, and when they sit down at the table, everything gets smoothed out. But this does not convey the idea that the table is always to be found in the same position; for that depends on the degree to which the "spirit" might move it.

Anita Ivanich is seated upon a box, at the work-bench; pulls out some willow-rods; goes to the bottle for a little comfort; and falls to her work like a man. A few tallow-candles upon the work-bench dimly reveal the long-stretched room in all its rough nakedness. She gets restive, and sings a little song, to encourage herself, casting timid, sidelong glances upon the wretchedness of her abode, and again she seeks solace in the bottle. The door is opened violently from the outside.

Anita looking about, surprised at the unusual commotion; the uncorked bottle still in her hand, just withdrawn from the lips.

At the threshold looms the powerful frame of Nicolai Ivanich, one foot on the last step outside, one in the room; and in his mighty paw he still holds the tiny bundle of humanity by the diaper, like a kitten carried by the fur of its neck.

Anita stares at him open-mouthed. "Nu, what do you sit there like a dummy? Look what I have brought you, a little jew." "Where did you get him?" she exclaims, recovering her wits. "Hah, to the Devil where I took him! We have settled account with the jews today; and here, you see,"—lifting the blinking child up in the air—"This is a little Blochmann; he will grow up a good Christian, God help me! What do you sit there, you half-dead creature? We haven't any of our own."

Seeing that anger is rising in him, she gets up heavily, and waddles up to the child. "Why don't you take it?" he roars, with voluminous expectoration, and stretches towards her the whimpering child. He rises to his full height, spitting in contempt: "Always crying; jewish blood!"

Then he walks up to the table, seizes the bottle, lifts it up to the light, with squinted eye measuring its contents with his fingers, and breaks out in anger: "Whv, Matka, you are going to get it in the neck, for you have again drunk more than your share" And with these words his neck, and that of the bottle, become one.

The bibulous woman rocks the crying child in her arms, under the stimulant swaying rather back-and-forward instead of sideways, and slowly she thus wobbles to the shadowy rear of the vast room, towards the bed.

* * *

Years come and pass. Nicolai Ivanich does not live to improve the conditions and his own self, but just the reverse. On a beautiful Sunday of which the following happenings are recorded, he loses his wife and is left alone in the world with the emaciated, five years old, little waif.

Coming home from church good brethren came along with them. Krennikof was the most welcome guest: the hardest drinker of Russia; some 50 years old, $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, weighing 220 pounds; in a fur coat reaching to his knees; a large mouth; a great, coarse, black beard, tough as horsehair, a well-reddened nose; a rope as girdle for the fur. That is all.

And of his wife there is nothing to say. That she is a chicken-thief was a secret. A head smaller she is than her worthy husband. In times of war he is always in wise retreat.

And the Dubowchis, quiet people when they are asleep; souls of dogs; both fat like flapjacks, which is not their own fault, though. But on Sundays they become imbued with saintliness.

The fifth guest was a horse-skinner; tall as a tree; in woven birch-rind shoes, who plays the accordion and lives to sin in this world.

The just described aristocrats sat down at the table, on a low, long bench, and ate and drank, and were merry. The little worm laid in the corner of the bed and weeped.

A large loaf of black bread was torn to pieces by eager hands, and the chunks disappeared with steaming bowls of soup. Other cravings were satisfied with vodka of which the contents of several bottles disappeared in short order.

Finally the table was pushed aside to make room for the next number on the regular Sunday program.

Anita Ivanich danced; Nicolai played the balalaika; the horse-skinner his accordion. The others applauded with hands and feet. And Princess Anita, in the surge of her heated blood, raised up her skirt and danced a Mazurka. The hot soup and flaming vodka had set her internally on fire, and she fell down, all of a sudden, unable to rise again.

The center of attraction thus tragically eliminated, the assembled guests soon made themselves scarce. On the same afternoon Anita breathed her last. Nicolai shed honest tears, in which, full-heartedly, joined the child.

The condition of the orphan did perhaps not become much worse through this bereavement; but most certainly they did not improve any.

* * *

At the age of 8 the orphan-boy is already helping to turn willow-rods, sweeps the room; is ill-fed but well-beaten at every occasion; clothed in the worst of rags. But the pale face is illuminated by a pair of clear, large eyes which prove mighty helpful to him in times of beatings, because he fixes them firmly upon the eyes of Nicolai Ivanich, who is unable to withstand their mute power of appeal. "Akh, go to the devil with your Yiddish eyes"; with these words he was wont to wind up with a kick. After such a scene Nicolai always claws his hairy breast; an evil taste is in his mouth as if wanting to spit out his very heart and soul.

* * *

Grisa Fedorowich is a man of fixed habits. When he chops wood for somebody he always needs a helper. The work of the helper is very simple, yet an imperative necessity to the worker. All he has to do is to stand by his side all day long and exclaim "Akh!" every time the heavy axe descends upon the blocks of wood.

The rhythmical, plaintive grunt seems to imbue the toiler with a new strength not of his own, and he used to pay, in bygone days, five kopeks a day to a fountain of borrowed vitality in the shape of a tired little boy who was to call out "Akh!" at each stroke of his master's axe.

But now he has a helper of his own. After the girl has reached the age of 8 he fetches her along to his work—rain or shine. When her throat becomes parched from the ceaseless self-same outcry, he enlivens her with words of abuse. Coming home from her daily grind she is permitted to do chores around the house.

Mrs. Fedorowich, during these eight years, has accumulated still more fat. For that reason she does not leave her broad chair, where she reposes, knitting, and issuing commands, and she sees to it that little Azhurka's clothes are of the poorest imaginable. In contrast to the ill-assorted clothes of the little girl are its curly, black hair and the delicate face with the kindly caressing eyes.

We see that eight years have brought no change in the appearance of the household, except that the geese are replaced by two little pigs, the care for which is part of little Azhurka's daily grind.

* * *

On an early morning Azhurka steps out of the nearby store with a bottle of kerosene. One of her wooden shoes gets caught between two cobblestones, and, slipping from her fingers, the bottle is shattered upon the ground with a crash. The little girl arises from her fall and stands immobile, looking down upon the wreckage, with tears in her eyes.

Little Maxim is engaged upon an errand with two baskets for delivery. Ragged and barefooted, he walks along, whistling to himself, unconcerned. But at the sight of the crying girl his inexpensive enjoyment comes to a sudden end. Like a true boy, he looks intently upon the wreckage, sniffing the spilled kerosene, and a great pity surges up in him.

"Are you afraid?" he asks kindly and she lifts her arm from the tear-stained eyes to cast a sidelong glance upon the source of an unexpected sympathy. With a sob she answers, "Sure, I am afraid!" "And what are you going to do about it?" he counters. At this question her frail body is racked with a new spasm of sobbing.

A sudden inspiration illuminates the boy's eyes as he exclaims, "Wait a while here; soon I'll have some money." With quick determination the little boy runs off, with the thin hands firmly pressing the precious baskets to his body, and in a little while he returns again, his hand filled with copper coins. Out of this wealth he picks 15 kopeks and hands them over to the little girl, with the words, "Take this; go and find yourself another bottle, and get your kerosene."

At these words she seems to brighten up; but immediately a cloud overshadows her features. "But you will get the beating now instead of me." He nods vehemently, "Maybe I do, maybe I don't! What's your name?" "Me? Call me Azhurka. And you?" "Maxim!" With this mutual introduction embarrassment overtakes them. Yet with an effort, the boy recovers his manliness, takes off his cap and follows with a kind look the girl, who departs with lowered head.

* * *

Not before he has almost reached the house Maxim realizes fully that a beating is in store for him. His frail little body twists and squirms in anticipation of the hail of blow in prospect. He casts a sad look upon the handful of coppers, murmuring, "Sixty kopeks! He surely will beat me!" With this

he peeps into the window to find out the mood of his enemy. At the sight of that worthy spitting vehemently his lips murmur, "Oh! I am going to get it hard this time!" Tears trickle down his emaciated cheeks in the mental vision of the torment to come. He walks down the few steps, trembling like a leaf.

"Ah, there you are, you black dog! Where have you been so long?" Maxim is already in a torrent of tears, and high-pitched exclamations of pain. Ivanich rises from the work table and asks again, "Where have you been?" "I have been—I have—I have been hunting for 15 kopeks which I have lost." "What? That can't be Tell that to your grandmother," and with these words he reaches for the leather strap of his pants, grunting, "Hm! soon we'll know everything."

With each blow the thin body of the little boy squirms, but the lips remain firmly pressed together. Ivanich gets sick of the whole affair, winding up with a kick as a sign for the victim to withdraw to the bed. And the grim executioner blusters out, "A Jew! What can you expect?"

* * *

A gray day of autumn in Russia. A row of damp, wooden houses, moist like bathed in tears. The heaven overcast with haunting, hazy shadows, as if forlorn. A thin rain drizzles down upon the narrow street, filled with mud and mire, oft reaching up to the knee, all of it looking in desolation like black wounds of Mother Earth.

On such a promising day Fedorowich has dragged himself through the little street. Thanks to his high boots he has been spitting and cussing less than he is capable of, and Azhurka follows in a little distance like a wet kitten. Grisa, with the sawhorse upon his shoulders, looks like a wandering, uprooted tree.

The saw with the axe and splitting-wedges are carried by the girl. Unceasing are her efforts to extricate her wooden shoes from the mire so that they should not get stuck. Flop, flop, she struggles along. Of a sudden she pulls up a thin foot, wrapped in rags, and calls out, "Ai!" But the heavy weight of the tools does not permit her to remain standing upon one leg; and with a splash the unshoed foot goes into the gutter with another plaintive "Ai!" In order not to be left behind she throws an anxious look upon the long wet body of her master, slips her foot into the evasive wooden shoe without taking the trouble of emptying its contents, and then runs after him. She is clad in a man's coat with long sleeves. What she wears beneath it the world will have to guess.

At last they stop at a two-story house, surrounded by a small garden, naked trees shorn of their foliage by the autumn winds. In the yard is piled up a mountain of wet, round logs. A dog tears at his chain to get at them Little Azhurka trembles of cold, and in fear of the dog alike.

The servant, Wanja, a woman in her sixties, with a double

chin, small, gray, watery eyes, of medium stature, good-natured, with an upturned nose. Her attention is drawn upon the girl. Her low forehead displays wrinkles due to attempts towards understanding.

"Hey! Say, Grisa, what do you drag that little rabbit along for? And in such a rain! Don't you have any heart at all?" He gives her an angry look, waves one hand in depreciation, and starts to saw one of the logs.

Wanja's pride is stung by the answer, and it increases her sympathy for the little girl. Her temper rises, and she calls out, "Say, Grisa, you old wood-thief!" She takes a step or two in his direction. Azhurka stands by, shivering of cold, and trembling of fear, since she cannot make up her mind as to who of the two is to be friend or foe.

Grisa lifts up his head, casting upon Wanja a look filled with such a hatred that she stops, afraid to advance a further step. "Go back to the kitchen and boil potatoes, old woman, and I shall attend to my own work in peace!" And I'll go into the house, to talk to his excellency, and he will show you all right."

"You go to the black year!" he roars, throwing his saw aside, and glowering at her like an old beast still aware of the soundness of its fangs. "Eh, you old hag, begone!" he exclaims, advancing upon her. She steps backward with the words, "What! You will beat a woman? I shall go to his excellency, all right," and quick she disappears behind the door.

The rain has increased powerfully and pours down by buckets. Little Azhurka sits down upon a wet log and huddles herself up in Grisa's ragged and wet fur coat. After he has sawed a few logs she hurriedly rises, takes her stand at his side and is ready for the toil assigned to her vocal chords.

* * *

A richly furnished room, tastefully arranged. The walls adorned with pictures of persons of standing and generals, because his excellency is a general himself, a bachelor, Stanislaw, about 50 years old, his hair sprinkled with silver-gray. High, slender, and of proud bearing; expressive, beautiful eyes, a Van Dyke; calm like a swan, he sits in a fauteuil, wrapped in a Persian robe. His Excellency reads a book.

Wanja has stopped at the doorstep to the salon; and, conscious of the fact that it needs only a tear on her part to waken his good heart, and lofty and free mind, she wipes her eyes with a corner of her apron. He looks up from his book with a screwed-up expression, as if meeting with something habitual, and exclaims, "Good morning, Wanja! What is the matter?" "He has insulted me," is the answer. "Grisa Fedorowich, the woodchopper, because I have scolded him for taking along his little girl in such a weather." Stanislaw, for a while, is lost in thought. "That is all right, Wanja; you have a good heart. Go and call both into the kitchen for a bite to eat; soon I shall step out, too."

She bows with a glad courtesy, and goes about her mission as ordered by her master. At the backdoor she stops for an instant with a triumphant smile. Then she puts her head through the half-opened door and shouts at the top of her shrill voice, "Hey! Grisa, come in the kitchen. His Excellency invites you and the little girl for a bite to eat." With these words she slams the door, without waiting for an answer.

Grisa stops in his work, shakes his head from side to side, scratches himself in the neck, with grouchy grunts, and slowly walks up to the house, gladly followed by shivering Azhurka. Wanja is busy around the samovar, stirring up the embers, blowing into them like bellows, slightly choking and coughing over the smoke.

On a little shelf back from and above the kitchen table, two small candles splutter at the side of an ikon representing Christ crucified. To the left of the table, in the usual inclosure, under the brick fireplace, a few chickens are busily picking wheat grains from a metal plate.

Grisa steps in uncertain, stops at the door, looks about, and at perceiving the ikon over the table, he takes off his shapka, and crosses himself reverently, while his eyes are already roaming for a place at the table as well as scrutinizing the zakusky spread upon it. Wanja pays no attention whatever to him, which makes him feel like lost. He walks up to the spread, takes a seat, sighs, and makes a start with a little glass. The narrow fringe of scant hair in the back of his head is in fullest harmony with the rest of his appearance. Though feeling quite out of place, and under the table, in embarrassment, shifting from foot to foot, his hands and mouth are, just the same, extremely busy with the food spread before them.

Wanja is turning her attention towards the forlorn little waif who has followed, unnoticed by him, in his steps, undecided, and seems to be deeply interested in the craning necks of the busy chickens.

Grisa is getting ever more closely acquainted with the contents of the magic bottle, assumes an air of dignity, which is a perfect misfit, as evidenced by furtive, fearsome looks cast upon Wanja for effect. With every drink taken he shakes his shoulders and gets busy skinning the herring before him with new ardor, eager to do the best work in his life.

* * *

Stanislaw appears at the door; the hands folded on his back; mute, majestic, tactful, in a pose as if about the strategy of capturing an enemy fortress. Grisa wants to arise respectfully, but a motion of His Excellency's hand invites him to remain seated. Paying no further attention to the wood-chopper, and turning to the trusted servant, the general calls out, "Bring the little girl to me in the salon."

Azhurka is filled with awe of the high gentleman, and her shining eyes are fixed upon the back of the tall figure step-

ping silently out of the kitchen. Wanja takes little Azhurka by the hand and follows the disappearing impressive form with tear-stained eyes.

Grisa watches it all with unsteady looks. But when he finds himself alone, or rather unobstructed, his hands and mouth become more steady in their food-and-drink absorbing activity. Yet of a sudden the entire complex machinery of hands, jaws and throat comes to a standstill. The fire of a thought glimmers up in his little eyes, and a tremble pervades his entire body. He shakes knowingly his head, and a pleased smile overspreads his face. He squints one eye, strokes with one hand his scant beard, passing the other over his forehead, and then he becomes all attention in order to catch the trend of the conversation in the adjoining room.

Stanislaw is in the salon, seated in his beloved fauteuil, and fastens his mild, yet penetrating glances upon the little girl, standing all a-tremble before him. Old Wanja is equally not at ease. Only when a smile endears his face, and he begins to ply the little waif with questions, the frightened girl, and the old woman alike, feel a weight taken from their shoulders.

Of all the questions addressed to her, little Azhurka is moved deepest by the one, "Would you like to live here?" Only she answers, "I do not know; I am afraid." "Afraid! Of whom?" She remains silent. Stanislaw's mind, in the meanwhile is tremendously active, driving towards a momentous decision. He casts one inquiring look upon Wanja, "What do you think about it? Hah! Take her upstairs, and fix her up. Do you feel yet strong enough to watch over her?" "Certainly, your Excellency; I can do it all right!" And joyfully she conducts the frightened little girl upstairs.

When Stanislaw appears again at the kitchen door, Grisa is rubbing his hands, a vision of good business enlivening his features with an unholy gleam. But at noticing the presence of His Excellency his face becomes a blank, he assumes an attitude of utter unconcern, and even starts to eat again, in order to strengthen the desired effect, just as if he had not heard a word of what had been going on in the next room; his little tricky eyes under the low forehead all the while shiftily watching His Excellency. Stanislaw looks him through and through, with one searching and understanding glance.

"Sell me your girl, Grisa!" Grisa swallows a bite and crosses himself, distorting his features as if he had heard something impossible.

"What are you talking about, your Excellency? To sell a child! Why, it is entirely out of the question!"

"Grisa, but if I put you behind the bars for gross neglect! Do you know that your child is sick?"

"Behind the bars! Your Excellency wouldn't do that I have a wife. Both of us have souls. We believe in God!" He contorts his face into a tearful grimace.

"Maybe you have a soul, but you are slippery like as an eel

just the same. And so you'll take ten thousand rubles, cash money."

"I am slippery, all right, your Excellency, I'll admit that much. But, but—her—my wife," he stammers.

"Do you believe in God, Grisa? Will you see your child happy?" Grisa's conscience begins to hurt a little. The thought of the bargain becomes uppermost in his mind, rather unsatisfactorily as to the amount, and he mumbles, "Hm—ten thousand—cash money?"

"Yes, cash money, Grisa; but should you ever be up to dirty tricks, it will mean Siberia for you; mark it well!" Grisa shivers and then says humbly, "Good, your Excellency; what you say is all true. I am getting old, and am hardly able to work very much longer. And then, Azhurka will be happy." Stanislaw sits down at the table, calls Wanja, orders her to bring pen, ink and paper; and thus Azhurka's fate is contracted between the two unequal parties in the deal.

Grisa carefully counts his money, eager to expectorate in order to hide his glad emotion, but he does not dare to reveal his true feelings under the steady gaze of Wanja. Slowly he turns and shuffles towards the door. As he is about to open it, the general calls him back to the table, fills a glass with wodka, looks the man squarely into the shifting eyes and says earnestly:

"Grisa, drink this, and understand me well. I do not want to see your face again. Do you get me?"

"Yes, your Excellency; I shall be gone for good." And with bowed head he turns, and walks out into the gray world—a mere shadow absorbed by shadows.

* * *

Since Nicolai Ivanich has buried his wife he is drunk every hour of the day. One fine Sunday, sitting as usual at the table, little Maxim serves the guests, who have already imbibed more than is good for their heads, becoming kind of affectionate towards each other. As soon as a bottle is emptied, all chip together and send out Maxim upon another act of mercy. At first they chatter of horses and pigs; then they slap each other upon shoulders and knees. At last they insult mutually their noble souls; the vodka adds its own blows, and the battleflag is unfurled in the stormwinds.

At this stage of the game little Maxim begins to look out for safety, taking refuge either under the bed, or, as opportunity affords it, out into the narrow street; as he reaches the door, an earthen pot follows him, crashing at the heels of his hurrying feet. And thus he escapes the hell behind him, and walks the streets, the hands in his pockets, with the thoughts of premature age in his little head.

In this unseeing meditation he brushes against little Azhurka, who is out for a walk with old Wanja. In her rich dresses Maxim hardly recognizes her. Azhurka is immensely glad to see him. Old Wanja is not quite satisfied with the meeting.

Maxim stands with lowered head, with an embarrassed

smile, casting looks of curiosity upon her fine clothes. At last he gets bolder and looks her in the face. "You are rich now, ha!" "And you?" she counters. He sadly bends his forehead in silence. "Did you get a beating for the fifteen kopeks?" "Yes, a good one." After all, Wanja gets a liking for the boy. The girl asks, "Will you come to my house and play with me?" "Gladly," he nods assent. "Where do you live?" "Near by the yellow church. Will you come to see me?" "Sure," he answers, swaying undecidedly upon his heels, turned half about, and fixing a roguish glance upon her. Then he runs off, in his hurry losing his cap, which makes him quite sheepish in the presence of the girl and her companion. He bends down, picks up the cap, and slowly walks on, followed by their eyes until he disappears.

* * *

On the following forenoon he comes to her to play in the yard. All the while he shrinks from contact with her. When the rubber ball hits him over his heart he begins to weep. With tears of compassion she wants to put her arm around his shoulder, but he sensitively withdraws from her grasp, which scares her quite a bit.

"Don't—don't touch me," he cries, "it gives me pain." "Where does it hurt you?" "All over it hurts." With this he rolls back the torn sleeve over one arm and displays an elbow blue and green, of blows received; the skin of the color of a suffocated chicken. The faces of both are bathed in tears. Following a sudden impulse she kisses his arm, and again tries to lay her hand upon his shoulder. "No—no—little dear, don't do it, I beg you; it hurts. Last night father got angry; and there, you see!" and he opens his shirt, and shows a body, beaten and bruised, discolored and emaciated.

Wanja steps out with two apples. From the distance their tears fill her with suspicion. But as she steps nearer, and notices the poor, maltreated body, tears well up in her eyes. "Where did you get beaten up like that, little fellow?" she asks. He struggles with words, but all he can utter is the word "papa." Old Wanja reaches for her apron, and weeps bitterly. The children weep in silence, and even the dog, touched by an indistinct sympathy, lifts up his head to heaven, and breaks out into a dismal howl. Wanja gets first the mastery over her sacred tears, and yells at the dog, "What are you howling about, you black-eyes? You are not human!" She conducts the crying children into the kitchen, and then goes to look for His Excellency.

Stanislaw is seated at the table covered with books and papers, intent upon writing. "Good morning again, your Excellency." "Good morning, Wanja, what has happened today? You have been crying!" A few more tears she sheds, speechless. Stanislaw becomes alarmed. "Tell me, Wanja. Maybe I want to cry, too; only I don't know what about!" he insists with a sunny smile. "Come downstairs, your Excellency and you'll see for yourself—you'll see for yourself."

And with these sobbed words she turns about to go, followed by him.

At the kitchen door Stanislaw halts in his steps, and takes all in at a glance. Azhurka is busy placing a cold compress upon the sore arm, while the boy is quivering in intense pain. The general walks up to the two children, and is struck by a strong likeness in their features.

Azhurka takes off the wet towel, exposing the ill-treated arm, and, with pitying eyes, looking up to the tall man, she exclaims, "Look, daddy, he is like this all over his body." And, unable to restrain herself any further, she tenderly places her arms around Maxim's neck and begins to weep silently. Maxim is hardly able to master his pain, manfully gritting his teeth; but finally his tortured body gets the best of his brave intentions and a cry of excruciating pain comes from his lips, at which the little girl releases him instantly, quite frightened.

Stanislaw, tall and erect, clenches his fists until droplets of blood emerge, where the nails have entered the tender flesh. Old Wanja sits in a corner, crossing herself and uttering prayers. The stern general unbends himself, opens the shirt over the quivering breast of the small boy, and it turns black before his eyes.

"Holy Mary! Who are you, my son, and who has beaten you up like that?" "I am the son of Nicolai Ivanich, the basket weaver. And it is he that beats me like that." "Have you a mother?" "No." Where do you live?" "Number 4, Nemecky Gasse, in the cellar."

His Excellency turns to Wanja, "Go, Wanja, get the doctor. I'll be out for a walk to think matters over." Old Wanja smears two slices of white bread thick with butter, for the children, and then goes on her master's errand. The children remain alone, together, the harmony flowing from their little hearts a soothing balm for their deep sorrows.

* * *

On his way to the basket maker, Stanislaw calls a policeman, who is loafing on his beat, under cover of his overcoat enjoying an illegal cigarette. The general shows him his booklet of identification, and the official stands attention, "To your service, Excellency!" Then he follows in duty bound, after a few steps turning his head with a mournful look upon the glimmering cigarette he had to drop. "Too bad!" he muses, and goes on.

When they enter the basket maker's cave-dwelling they find that worthy in boots, stretched out full length upon his bed like a sack of straw. The policeman with his sword hits, not all too gently, the soles of the sleeper's boots, who sits up, aroused, calling out to the officer, "What brings you here, you shiny button?" But when he notices the presence of Stanislaw he shrinks back into himself.

His Excellency, calmly and thoroughly, scans everything he can lay eyes on, and then turns to Nicolai, "I have come

to have you arrested, Nicolai!" The basket maker is dumbfounded, stuttering, "Have me arrested! What for?" "You ask why? You have a son about ten or twelve years old?" "Yes." "You have beaten him up like an apple!" "Yes; but that is my business!"

Stanislaw looks down upon him with loathing, "You are no human being! I am going to have you arrested, and that will make your son's an affair of my own." With these words he turns away, and walks out, leaving the miscreant in care of the gendarm.

Nicolai is on the jump to follow the general, but halts in his effort, suddenly losing his nerve. The officer, keen in detecting the moral breakdown, takes advantage of the condition, has hardly any need for using his weapon, and, easily subduing his prisoner, leads him away.

Arrived at home, Stanislaw finds the doctor still present. Little Maxim is in Azhurka's nightdress, snugly tucked away in her bed. His eyes are heavy with sleep, and only with an effort he keeps them open. Azhurka is sitting upon the end of the bed, stroking his hands with tender fingers, and in each other's faces are reflected their wan smiles.

Old Wanja, standing aside, is watching it all, and unrest fills her, as she sees the doctor whisper into His Excellency's ears, with a grave expression in his features; the general listening with sadly bowed head. To dispell the heavy cloud Stanislaw orders Wanja to bring the carafe with cognac, and then he drinks solemnly a toast with the doctor, whose gray hairs offer no objection whatever to such a proceeding.

In court the case of the basket weaver takes its regular course, and the truth comes to the light, like oil surging to the surface of water. The boy is, of course, not his own, while, also, no proofs are available to prove his identity, the wretched prisoner refusing to give any information in the matter, in spite of solitary confinement in a dark cell full of rats. Finally he is found guilty and sent to prison.

* * *

Youth—crystal-clear days follow; days that come and pass softly like velvet threads—

As we raise again the curtain, our eyes rejoice over the two 15-year-old young people and the budding love in their simple hearts is brought to our attention. Maxim is already foolish enough to imagine that he is in love with a beautiful Jewish girl, Sorka Feinberg. But it is only on the surface, just enough to arouse the jealousy of Azhurka, and also sufficient to cause good old Stanislaw some annoyance.

A Rendezvous—Sorka Feinberg lives in a half-street. In front of her parent's house a windowless shack—the well-known typical butcher shop in Russia. Dangling over the open door, above which heavy hooks are fastened, hang skinned carcasses of muttons, calves, and the like more.

Ever so often we see fly through the open gate into the courtyard the innards of a calf, or a chopped-off leg, or

again bones and other offal. The customers of this cast-off trade are homeless dogs, stray hogs of the neighbors, and ravens. The whole yard looks more like a battlefield. The cats are too particular, in their innate neatness, to bother about the bones sweltering in blood; but just the same they disturb the dogs and the ravens in their scavenger feast.

Especially noticeable are two of the ravens, one of which perches upon the back of a very busy, greedily grunting hog, while the other is standing upon one leg on the ground, near the porker's head, with drooping wings, as if ready for the grave; the head turned sideways with a look of inquiry, in a sad meditation, or was he thinking at all? Who knows?

Suddenly a young ram appears upon the scene, in gay frolic charging all living things with his itching horns, and holds the field alone in the end in a victory without glory.

Sorka looks out through the back door, as soon as the student Maxim appears in the near distance, and both a-tremble in the awkwardness of youth they step out together into the little half-street, walking side by side, unable to speak a word.

* * *

It is worthwhile mentioning an incident in Maxim's adolescence. Maxim was sitting in his room writing a composition. Since he had for his subject two heroes in love, beating up each other for the same fair damsel, upon the paper, he could not help himself taking a part in the scrimmage by assisting the weaker of the two, who had his sympathy.

The picturization of his own head and handiwork possessed him so powerfully that he had to get up, beating the air vigorously with his fists in defense of his chosen knight, even getting hold of a chair, with mighty sweeps of it demolishing some of the furniture in the room.

The fearful racket brought Azhurka and Wanja upon the field, whose cries of terror woke him to the realization of his true environment, and he stood, bewildered and shamefaced in his tracks of destruction. We might call this a good prognostication for a budding literary genius.

* * *

An important moment in the life of the children is the departure of the good general at the head of his corps for the Russo-Japanese war. His absence brings Maxim and Azhurka closer together again, and often they have bitter petty-quarrels, which blind them for the time being to discern their mutual love.

Wanja, the old, faithful servant, is getting more corpulent and waddles about like an old duck. But her heart has grown by the good times passed through. And with this good heart she suffers when it tells her, instinctively, at nightfall, that standing outside is lone Sorka wistfully trying to peek through the half-closed shutters.

When Stanislaw returns from the war, he is no more the same man. Under the silver-gray of his hair are the pain-

spiritualized features of a prophet. He is a man very much broken in health, whose only bridge to life seems to be his two extraordinarily beautiful adopted children. The more his strength of life is ebbing out, the more tenderly he wraps them in his love, like some tender and delicate flowers. But to old Wanja he becomes ever more cranky, and she relieves her poor heart by weeping, and complaining about it to the children.

Maxim and Azhurka come to the conclusion to try to convince him that it would be for the best to sell everything in order to go to a health resort in Switzerland, that he might recuperate his waning strength and health. They impart their mutual understanding to Wanja, who full-heartedly falls in with their plans, and all three go downstairs together.

They find His Excellency seated in the fauteuil, deeply interested in a book. The hanging lamp diffuses a blue light over everything. On the table sings the samovar. Slowly the kind old man looks up from his book, turns to Maxim and asks, "Tell me, what is your faith?" "My faith is in truth." "And yours, Azhurka?" "Mine? Oh, yes! In a clean conscience." With a sad resigned smile he shakes his head at the answers, and his chin is lowered upon his breast.

At this sight the children embrace and kiss their benefactor, and with the exuberant fervor of devoted love they lay before him their suggestions, trying to convince him of the justice of their hopeful plans. At first he does not want to give in, and thus give up—a hard thing for the true soldier in the best sense of the word. But when the children implore him upon their bended knees, with tear-stained faces, he finally gives his consent, and right on the next day, already, they are on their way to the new destination.

On the train, of a sudden, his condition takes a turn to the worse. After a few days the good man breathes his last, after a final admonition to his beloved ones: "Go to America, my beloved, get married and be happy." Heart-rendingly they cry over the demise of their benefactor, and the mutual loss brings them closer to each other.

A Hamburg-America liner plows her path through the mighty main, a black stream of smoke above, a white streak of foam in its wake, and on board are two young people, whose path through the ocean of life we are still farther to follow.

* * *

A four-room flat, tastefully furnished. Esther rocks a baby in her arms—a glad, young mother. Just now Maxim enters, back from his daily task, happily exchanges pleasantries with wife and child; and then he helps to set the table. A plate in his hand, he stops for a moment, absorbed in thought, at which she gazes at him in expectancy.

"A hard day's work, hey, Max?" "No, not that. On the car coming home a passenger cast a look upon me, and the glance of that man has filled me with a deep sadness. The

shadows of night seem gathered in him to spread wide from his soul, on dark, silent wings. From his looks he is apparently a jew, good looking and intelligent, neatly dressed, with a bow-tie and with side-whiskers, apparently a writer, some 55 years old. He looks like a perambulating funeral, and gave me the creeps. I am yet filled with a dread presentiment that, some day, he is going to throw a heavy rock across the path of my life."

"Ah, forget it!" she tries to comfort him. "Maybe it is only a poet unhappy in love!" Both join in a good laugh; but the full heart of Max is lacking in it. They eat their supper in meditative silence, which she interrupts with the question: "Are you going to the club tonight?" "Shall I go, darling?" "Sure! go, but don't come home too late." "You are so good!" and he kisses her.

"Perchance he is a member of my club!" muses Max. "Who is a member?" "Oh, the man I saw on the car!" She looks upon him astonished: "What! You have him still in your mind?" "Yes, I can not forget him. It is as if I had seen these eyes already somewhere, long, long ago." With these words he passes his hand heavily over his face, as if overshadowed by some impending evil.

"Then don't go to the club, Max!" "Why, now?" "Oh, you are liable to meet him again, and a creature of his kind disseminates seeds of melancholy. Don't go then." "You talk like a child," he retorts in slight anger. "I have a feeling he has something to tell me." "Well, then go. Have you a little patience Max?" "What! have you another newly-hatched poem?" "Yes." "All right read it." Max wiggles under the influence of the effort, and good-humoredly advises her not to spoil so much good paper. After supper he helps her with the dishes, kisses wife and baby goodbye, and is on his way.

Downstairs two elderly men sit upon the door-step, in earnest conversation. "Yes—yes! Many a man runs into a fire to purify himself and find the way to his own self!" These words strike Maxim's ears. A tremor pervades his body, and with accelerated steps he walks in the direction of the club.

On the next corner he collides with a man, absentmindedly, and asks his pardon, getting for reply: "Certainly! but you have spoiled my best corn."

At the foot of the stairs to the club, a man comes toward him, well under the influence of liquor. The new-comer, in an attempt of good humor, shows his tongue to Max exclaiming: "I am a traveling salesman." "So I see, but you are traveling too fast!" At this the commercial traveler clumsily unbuttons his coat and shows Max an end of his shirt, hanging out of his trousers. Max shouts into his ear: "You are full as a barrel," and proceeds to ascend the stairs. The full barrel struggles frantically to keep its balance, but ultimately must needs surrender, sliding down the last eight steps on an ignoble part of his anatomy.

Arrived at the club, Max is out of tune with his environment, and does not feel comfortable at all. The heavy clouds of tobacco smoke smother him. The sounds of some instruments grate upon his nerves, and he rises in a sudden decision to go to the Blue Bird Cafe.

* * *

The Blue Bird Cafe is a good place to pass the time, to your heart's delight, at a cup of coffee. Broken members of human society take advantage of this opportunity to get a peaceful nap, lulled to sleep by operatic music dispensed from a pianola. It is kind of a temporary haven of refuge for the homeless.

Max retires into a corner, gives his order, sits under the gathering weight of a dire presentiment of impending evil, and he feels as if he were about to stand at parting cross-roads in his life. He looks about like for a refuge from his painful thoughts.

The unknown stranger from the street-car enters, his sombre dress but emphasizing his weird impression. His whole attitude, and his actions seem to be steeped in mystery. Rather above medium size, with sharply outlined features, Mr. Tannenbaum, a Jewish poet. Their eyes meet, and the poet starts to move in the direction of Max, who becomes all eyes, unable to move.

"May I sit down at your table?" asks the poet. "Yes, if you please!" answers Max, at the same time feeling that the new arrival is bearer of a secret that already throttles his throat in an icy grip. He breathes with heavy effort.

The new-comer gives the waiter his order, and then turns to Max: "Perhaps you have heard my name. I am Tannenbaum, a writer," and with this introduction he tenders Max a marble-white hand. In the following quiet, each lost in thinking, Max, of a sudden, becomes conscious of the fact that he has not answered the stranger.

"Akh, excuse me, I am glad to make your acquaintance; and, although I do not know you—yet—" Tannenbaum watches the slow aimless gyrations of a few specks of coffee grounds swimming on the surface of his cup, and then both, as if by a common motive, lift up their eyes, and fix their gaze upon each other, deep and penetrating, yet with tactful hesitancy, as if in doubt as to who should speak first.

"Are you a Russian from Kieff?" asks Tannenbaum with a note of profound secrecy. And, without waiting for an answer, he proceeds: "You look very much like a friend of mine in Kieff." "Yes, that is quite possible," replies Max; "I am a Russian from Kieff." They smoke in silence, and then the poet says again: "My company seems not to be pleasant to you. You look very much distressed" Max rejoins: "To the contrary: I have a feeling that we simply had to meet. We are both bound up together in some way. Is it not so?" Intently he gazes upon the black eyes of the writer from which an ice-cold shaft seems to penetrate his innermost being.

Tannenbaum reaches into his breast-pocket and withdraws

a picture of his friend, Isidor Blochmann of Kieff, silently handing it over to Max, who, looking upon it with astonished interest, exclaims: "Strange, indeed, he really resembles me. But he is a jew, while I am a _____. " "Ah, that is just it! Shall I tell you?" "Yes, please; if it is not too hard on you. But there is too much noise here. Let us, rather, go to the park, if it is convenient." "Certainly! Let us go!"

They pay, step out into the street, and walk to the park. There they sit down upon a bench, in the dim light of a lantern. Max is filled with dread, and with curiosity to hear the story of the stranger. Tannenbaum begins to unravel the thread of the deep mystery that has devoured his heart all these years; ever since the program.

"Before I begin my tale, I want you to know that I am of the belief that you are the son of my friend, Isidor Blochmann." "What are you talking about? I am a Russian!—A Christian!" Max is filled with the restlessness of a bird before a coming storm.

"Then listen to me as calmly as you can. In September 18_____. " "The year of my birth!" interrupts him Max. "You see then already how everything pours itself in the glass!" With a sigh he continues: "A year of stormy times. Many mad winds swept then over Russia. The mob suffered of hunger. The nagaikas had done their cruel work; the swords cut human flesh like cabbages! And the Jew!—Akh, you don't know!" He covers his face with both hands. "I have been through it myself, and, akh, it is hard to have to live on after such an experience." He weeps. Max puffs feverishly at his cigarette. "On the fourth of September, the well known mob, armed with clubs and rocks, iron-bars and hatchets swept through the Ghetto, leaving behind death and destruction, fire and scattered feathers." He stops, and immobile they sit, wrapped in silence.

"I was then in the house of my friend. It was toward evening. A steady rain drizzled down, and our hearts were filled with a heavy foreboding. Myself, he and his beloved wife, both intelligent, peaceable beings. She prepared the table for supper, and I played with the twins, a little girl and a boy. He sat at his table, a watchmaker. Suddenly a great outcry arose from the street: "Kill the accursed of the Lord!" Trembling fear seized us. I reached for my hat. They did not want to let me go. But I talked it over with them, and quieted their fears with the remark that I was going to go to the police station where I had a personal friend.

"Hardly was I only a few steps from their house, when a brick came in my direction, followed by a veritable rain of rocks. I began to run for my life, passing thus several blocks, all the while struck by blows. The last one I felt on my head. It made me dizzy. I fell—.

"When I regained my consciousness, it was late in the evening. My first thoughts were for Blochmann. I dragged myself painfully back to the house, and as I drew near, I saw a tall human shape with a lantern, carrying something away.

A Cossack on horseback loomed up suddenly, and I withdrew in a corner. But I heard the crying of a child. Oh, that I had had strength, at that time!

"Finally the coast was clear nad I moved up to the entrance of the house. The dim light of a street-lantern filtered in; and —oh!—what a sad picture!—More I do not remember,—and then, again, I felt being carried long,—oh! so long and far"

The poet becomes silent, and seems to listen to the weeping of his own heart.

* * *

Max sits there, listless, stupefied,—only his imagination is feebly at work, fluttering on shattered and bleeding wings far back into the land of remembrance. Half forgotten memories are lightning up in him, in a clearness not calling for crude facts. Picture after picture comes, and fades again, before his inner eyes. Like a flash his ears hear again the voice of Nicolai Ivanich call out: "Dirty Blochmann, a Yiddish good-for-nothing!" "Oh!—Is it that?" he mutters. And had not old Wania told him that Azhurka had been bought from a prince? "Ah!—what am I thinking about! Am I not a Russian?" But the resistless, merciless current of thoughts drags him along, a mere chip of wood in the grin of a rapid torrent. In his head he feels the shock of a deep fall: "Then I am Blochmann—me! —me!!—me!!!—Blochmann!—and my wife is my own sister! —Oh God!—I am losing my reason.—No—how could that be!"

He rises heavily to his feet, panting, and casting sinister looks upon Tannenbaum. The poet is thoroughly frightened, and tries to calm him, terror and entreaty in his eyes. But Max is filled with an irresistible craving to lacerate and throttle the man, with a thirst for blood like a beast of prey. He throws himself upon the frantic poet, grasps his throat, and shakes him until white foam issues from the lips of both.

"I—am Blochmann?—I—the father of my own sister's child? —Ha—ha—ha!—me!—" and he gets a firmer strangle-hold of his victim. The incoherent shoutings of Max bring some pedestrians to the scene, who pull him from the poet in which struggle he tears their clothes almost to shreds, in superhuman strength born of despair, and then the young men lead him to the bench, holding him there in a sitting position.

Tannenbaum regains his consciousness, and looks down upon Max, who is nearly exhausted. A flood of tears flows from his eyes. "Shall we call a cop?" one of the young men asks him. "No!—no, please!" "But look at our clothes! Who is to pay for that?" The poet reaches into his breast-pocket, and pulls out some bills, which he hands them, together with his card, remarking: "Take this, and if it should not be enough, come to my address, and I will settle with you. But now, please, leave us alone."

As the young men walk off, one remarks to his companion: "I guess it is some love affair!" The other shakes his head in doubt: "I don't know.—I don't like the whole affair." They turn about with suspicion, muster the two critically from head

to foot, look into each other eyes, laugh up aloud, and resume their walk.

Max finds himself again, with an acute pain in his heart which penetrates deeper and ever deeper. His weeping is not human, a series of painful sounds issuing from his innermost being like the soughing of a wind, or souls torn into shreds. Tannenbaum feels Gehenna opened before him, that part of the place of eternal torment where all the oppressed weep, and the deeply mortified.

The plaintive ululations of pain float upon velvet-wings through the park, filling every nook with the unutterable tragedy of the life of a man. From these sounds blows an icy breath over the warm life of loving couples in the park, and they get up, and flee to the entrance as if hounded by jackals. Tannenbaum presses his temples with both hands. Max rises of a sudden and disappears in the shrubbery. For a moment there is oppressive silence. The poet strains his ears to listen, and when, from a distance, again come the sounds of grief of the stricken man, Tannenbaum can not stand it any longer, and with outstretched hands of a hopeless appeal for help he hastens toward the entrance. For an instant he halts, pressing both fists to the sides of his head and then again he stumbles on with helplessly uplifted arms.

* * *

Esther sits restless in a rocking-chair, her ears all the time listening for steps upon the stairway. "He does not come!—Why don't he come?—When will he come?" She turns down the gasflame a little, and sinks again into her seat. The woman in her surrenders to tears in an indefinite, depressing presentiment.

* * *

At the outskirts of the park Tannenbaum halts to gather new strength. Who knows with what thoughts his looks fathom the starry sky? Only now, after all is passed, he begins to realize the deep pain racking his body and soul. He presses his heart with a sigh. "O!"—comes the plaint of his race from his lips, as he looks up to heaven. "No answer from there! no answer comes!"—"Oh, carry me on, my tired feet!" And they move, in obedience to his call, on through the night, on through the vaguely lit streets, while his soul is steeped in a stupor of exhaustion. His ghost-like silent peregrination disturbs only a few cats prowling over garbage-cans.

Near midnight it is when he arrives at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Fiftieth Street, and leans against a wall, all tired out. He looks back upon the park with the bewildered expression of one lost in a forest, and his ears strain to listen, as if for the voice of some bird, to guide him back to the lost path leading through the wilderness. Only far different sounds reach his ears. From the environing city-blocks, clear as silver-bells, chime the voices of early newsboys, in their struggle for coppers, nickels and dimes calling out: "Morning paper, Sir!" The vague, monotonous chant for elusive pennies echoes and re-echoes in gentle sound-waves that benumb the poet's

senses like with wavelets of tepid water, that almost coax him to fall asleep standing. An approaching automobile, though, rouses him.

The machine is fully lighted, and rushes up like a meteor of metropolitan life. With a heavy thud it swerves into the field of vision, its front-wheels passing the curbing, some thirty feet from Tannenbaum, and four young people in the gorgeous vehicle hilariously welcome the young day; or are they only followers of the night, left behind? Who can tell?

Upon a canvas-table, inside of the car, scintillate glasses with red wine, like blood and rubies, in the electric light. The chauffeur in the front seat has also no complaint coming, except, maybe, that his life is aimless, an empty bubble, which he does not know, and which is unknown alike to his passengers, who, in that respect, are in the same boat with him.

The curtains of the windows of the machine are lowered, but again and again they roll up, disobedient to man in his sullied condition. Fragments of sordid, drunken discourse reach the poet's ears: "Don't, Jack!—You are tearing my—— Ah! let go, that's——" "Shut up, you tin Lizz'!" This banal bit of reality brings the poet back to earth, and the loathing of it urges him on, and again he passes on, slowly, in the direction of the city.

* * *

It is full day now, and in his progress Tannenbaum almost collides with a group of women standing in the street, in front of a house. His sensitive ears pick up a few words of the conversation: "He has not come home yet——." "How will she be able to stand it——." "She is so delicate of health." The poet, all of sudden, realizes the heavy task as yet ahead of him. Without asking any questions he walks up to the steps of the house, leaving the rest to his intuition. At the right door he halts. As he grips his heart with one hand, he lifts up the other to knock for admission. But, like the tremulously fluttering wings of a tired bird, the trembling fingers sink, and end in resting heavy upon the door-knob, in need of support. He gathers himself, and straightens up, yet not relinquishing his hold; the door opens with the effort, and in the opening he stands bewildered. Attracted by the noise Esther enters from the adjoining room; yet at the discovery of the stranger she shrinks back, retreats, and leans heavily, with both hands and her back, against the table.

Yes, recognition dawns upon her. It is the man whom Max had met upon the street-car. Deadly terror appeals mutely from her eyes, while, unable to struggle for words, her features twitch and tremble.

The poet sways upon his feet under the strain of the emotions; cold sweat drips from his forehead; his eyes look listless before him; tired out to the last spark of his life he stands before her with sad entreaty. He makes an effort to meet her glance;—the familiar traits of his unfortunate friend in her features come to his consciousness with the intensity of pin-pricks of living fire.

Esther senses the impending menace bound-up with the coming of that man, but she is powerless to do anything to avert it, like a person dreaming of approaching danger, yet unable to escape the grip of the nightmare. The child in the corner becomes restless, and its cries act as a sedative upon her nerves. She feels drawn to the cradle but fails in her strength.

"Who are you?" she manages to utter in the end, after a protracted silent struggle. "I bring you bad news, my child. Be strong!" His head sinks upon his breast, the hat falls upon the ground, revealing the motley gray hair of the poet. With tears in her eyes she clinches both fists, impatiently muttering: "I know—I know!" and she bends forward in surrender, and bends toward the old man, with the plaintive pleading: "Where is Max?" No answer comes from the lowered head. Again she asks the stranger: "Where is Max?" She bends her knees, in frantic supplication gripping the coat of the venerable man: "Max!—Max!—where is he?" Oh, how hard is life for him, as he looks down into her tear-stained eyes! "Not yet—not yet, my child. As yet I can not tell you." With a still firmer grip she holds on to the old man: "Oh, please, tell me the worst now; if you don't I shall lose my reason!"

In vain she searches his eyes, and tries to fathom the depth of his soul,—there is no response. "I simply can not, my child. He lives;—more I cannot tell now." With these words his body trembles like a stricken oak of the forest, and down he sinks in a merciful faint, in front of her who is herself barely conscious of her own existence.

* * *

Three months later we, again, lift the curtain, upon a large, scantily furnished room right under the roof. A cradle, a few pieces of furniture, a little stove, an improvised table, upon which are spread, without order, a score of books and of good many writing tablets. Does she write? A night-lamp flickers upon the window-sill. In the shadow sits Esther, rocking herself mechanically, the sad face towards the window.

A little white dog lays at her feet and looks up to her. The sadness of the mistress seems to overcast equally the faithful soul of the dumb creature. As soon as it feels the coming of a rainstorm it runs down into the yard, and howls heart-rendingly, for which performance the neighbors bombard the distressed creature with what they just can lay hands on. Many peoples as yet, believe in evil spirits.

Esther has become thought personified, a thought working with the speed of lightning, and, permeating with this thought the entire cosmos, she writes verses, polished pearls, for which a literary parasite throws her a meagre income. A genuine Praying-Mantis, with neither nose or forehead of any amount, dressed like a slobby literate, with a bat's eyes, and a smile, sweet as castor-oil.

Tannenbaum comes to see her often, he plays with the child, gathers her scattered poetry, and writes at the bottom of each the words: ". . . The mother—of my brother's . . ."

At every sound upon the stairs she starts up and listens—, listens—.

Autumn,—yellow leaves are fluttering to the ground, and with them a new passion fills her sick soul. On rainy days she likes, now, to leave her child with a neighbor,—a good-natured, dried-up English woman, with a bosom as desolate and dry as the Sahara; but a good soul at all that.

Esther then throws a shawl over her shoulders and walks through the hazy, empty streets, followed by the faithful, little dog,—and always she braces the wind. The stronger the storm blows into her face, and whips her body, the more it seems to be to her heart's content. Her lips move as in a prayer: "Blow!—Blow! dear winds! Oh stronger!—still more; one pain numbs another!" And with a terror of intensity she breasts the storm-winds.

But for this outburst of passion she has to pay a heavy price. When she returns home, she is all broken,—a mere feather whirled on by the slightest breeze. Like an iridescent, delicate soap-bubble she sinks upon her bed, and then she is rocked with fever, anxiously watched, and cared-for, by Tannenbaum, whom the scared English Miss has called, as she is wont to in such cases.

* * *

Night has come upon its velvet wings; it is past eleven o'clock before Esther wakens, and she notices at her bedside the poet, his head bowed in thought. With feverish, feeble fingers she touches his hand, and he trembles at this contact. "Do you feel better?" he asks, like a father, thoughtful for a sick child, entrusted to his care. She keeps silent, and looks about her with questioning eyes. "What do you want, Esther?" She fixes her eyes upon him with an expression that causes him to shudder. Raising herself to a half upright position she bends toward him with the mien of one about to reveal a secret, and, catching up with her, as yet, masked question, he inclines his head to be ready for her call.

"Do you know where Max is?" she whispers into his ear. "No my daughter; I do not know." He feels her almost scorching breath come nearer to his face. "Do you want to know where he is?" she asks again. "Yes, child, tell me!" "So I shall, but you must not tell it to anyone else. He is just fixing up the sky." The poet painfully closes his eyes, while she continues: "And do you know what he'll do after that?—He is going to trim the whiskers of the old Gods. And when they don't let him, he throws them down upon our earth where they are turned into human beings."

"You are sick, my child. Lay down and rest yourself. Do you want a glass of milk?" Good old Tannenbaum gently caresses her feverish brow, and she withdraws, offended like a child.

"Do you want to listen to me?" she resumes. "Yes, I will" "He has begged me to join him in Heaven." The venerable poet looks her mildly, but firmly, into the eyes, in an endeavor

to help her concentrate upon a clear and distinct thought. And to a certain degree he succeeds, after a silent, battle of souls. His is the stronger. In an awakening half-consciousness she begins to cry, and sobs out the plea: "Perhaps you know where he is?" Whereupon he replies: "No, but I shall go and look for him" "Good!" she exclaims, with the impulsive gladness of a child clapping her hands in eager approval. "When will you start out?" "As soon as you are asleep like a good little woman." Now she gives in and sinks back upon her pillow, closing her eyes.

At that moment the door opens silently, and in the aperture appears a funny head with a richness of many paper rolls, with scant hairs entwined around them. It is the dried-up, but correspondingly good-hearted, Miss from the British isles, casting an inquiring look upon Esther and the good old man watching over her. Upon a signal of the poet she enters on tip-toe to go about needed work in the room, while Tannenbaum, with a parting glance upon the sleeper, goes upon his painful errand.

* * *

Merely seen from the outside the Bowery lives in the night as well as in the day, but at closer view it appears to be more quiet. He who is the glorious possessor of a dime, has but to step in to get a chance to sleep like a "Kaiser before the war." And he whose nose is a little obstructed in its passages, can manage even to sleep like a very God. The usually rotten mattress does not matter to the tired human derelict; and, on the other side, the gray, slimy and dirty walls care even less for the ever changing, and, at bottom, ever selfsame inmates:—they are used to the broken lives to whom they give shelter through the sombre nights.

Through most of the night Tannenbaum makes the weary round from dingy and cobwebbed caravanserai to glaringly-lit plaster-cast imitation-marble-palace, from rooming house to hotel, in the ever waning hope to find Max. Ceaselessly he wanders on, more depressed after each futile search.

In one of the palaces visited upon his errand he disturbs a man absorbed in an altruistic act of self-improvement; viz: trying to generously bestow upon a sleeping neighbor his own dilapidated shoes in exchange for that fellow's less torn foot-wear.

To the left of Tannenbaum an elderly man with a very much wrinkled face talks in his sleep:—"Ah!—they stole it!—they stole it!—they stole my patent!—Run! the city is on fire,—the whole city is in flames!—Ah! my patent was so good: I am a genius—ha!—ha!—ha—Those thieves!—They wrecked my life!—Run! run!—for all your life is worth! Run! my friends!—the city is on fire—Fire! Fire!" and he wakes from his own hollering, only to meet Tannenbaum's passing glance. Now the fully awakened dreamer continues to a different tune. "Do you have some loose change, Sir? Give me enough for a cup of coffee." The poet hands him a few small coins, which the other fellow receives with thanks, tucks away into a ragged

vest pocket, only to roll back on his cot to continue his dreams of shattered prosperity, intermingled with arson.

Tannenbaum turns to go, and, in passing on, brushes against the back of a chair, at a round table, near the entrance, at which a number of, what Gorky would call: "Creatures that once were men," are engaged in a game of cards. The man in the seat turns about with a scowl, accepting the intruder's polite apology with an insolent stare: and the shiftless, or piercing, glances of the rest of the players follow the humbly, but cleanly, dressed old man with a scarcely concealed hostility, that fills the poet with loathing, utter disgust, and the realization of the hopelessness of his task.

With bowed head he retraces his steps,—but stops no more,—to his distant two-room apartment, and there he sinks into his rocking-chair to rest his worn-out body from his strenuous peregrinations through the night. So utterly exhausted he is that he has not even removed his coat and hat. Dark shadows seem to pass over his brow, and his face assumes a terrible expression, as his eyes fall upon the dimly outlined clothes in the half opened closet. His tightly pressed lips slightly open, and almost inaudibly he mutters to himself: "What shall I do? How shall I go on living? I can not give life nor can I destroy it!"

The reflection of the pictures in the morbid back-ground of his troubled brain seems to take on a shadowy form amongst the vaguely visible garments in the closet. And lo! it is Max incarnated, there, in a semi-luminous green suit. Ghostly pallid he proffers a shadow-hand with the dispairing question: "What have you done?" And the apparition vanishes again before an answer is given. "Hallucinations!" exclaims Tannenbaum, trying to get a grip upon himself and passes an impatient hand over his forehead, half-heartedly adding: "I must be sick." Yet he has no power to rise and keeps his eyes riveted to the spot where only a moment before he had apparently seen the unfortunate son of his martyred friend of far away Russia. Is there no mercy for him? No end to the tortures of his soul? What has he done?

The grey mists of early dawn are wafted through the open window into the half-opened clothes-closet, and they play an uncanny game with the folds and wrinkles of indistinctly visible coats, and pants and hats, and as if touched by a magic wand they condense into a lovely, yet pitiful, roseate shape:—Esther; unutterable sadness in her eyes, and from the tremulous lips again the hardly audible question: "What have you done?" the question he can not answer, and no one else can, and with the first ray of the morning sun the vision vanishes like the first.

"What have I done?" the poet asks himself, wringing his hands in bitter despair. He looks up, his eyes meet the clock on the wall, and its tick-tack seems to take up the unceasing question of his tormented soul: "What have I done?—What could I have done?" The tick-tack of inexorable accusation of the soulless, merciless, clock drives him almost to madness.

And under its spur he rises of a sudden, and seats himself at his table to write; but more than the words: "What could I have done!" he can not put down, as a tremor seizes his hands.

In sudden resolution Tannenbaum gets up, turns off the gas flame that has been flickering all the time, steps out in the still darkened hallway, closing the door behind him, and starts to walk down-stairs. But after a few steps he halts irresolutely, lets himself down upon a step, resigned, and looks up, pensively, into the pale bluish flame of the gas-jet above the stair-way. Lamp hangs the hands over his knees;—thin, long, white marble-hands. Effortless, and powerless, the unusually long, slender tapering fingers seem to droop like tired petals of a flower, and in their lifelessness they express the mental condition to their owner. "What could I have done?"—these hands seem to say in helpless, and hopeless, query, and the same helplessness, and hopelessness, seems to emanate from his dejected features. His entire being has no answer to the simple and yet so momentous question. And you humans, so full of earthly wisdom, have you any answer to give? I wonder!

* * *

With curses upon his lips Max wanders about, in ragged clothes. His heart is chilled, and over his forehead hover dark clouds. The human beings ne snubs, and they avoid him like a plague. And when he feels, instinctively, that, perhaps, someone stands still to look after him, he turns around as quick as a cornered beast, and utters blasphemies,—words like drops of poison: "Idiots!—Hypocrites!—Weaklings!—Dirty liars!—Parasites!"

The face with the hollow cheeks and protruding chin defiantly stretched forward, with eyes piercing like lances; upon the head the remnants of what was once a hat, under which protrude dirty strands of long hair; the face unshaven,—one side of the beard snorter than the other;—who trimmed it? From one shoe escapes a dirty toe. The pants flop and flutter against the wind, old and dilapidated. Around the waist is wrapped a strip of canvas, long enough to encircle twice the emaciated body. Higher up some remains pose as a shirt, exposing, in places, the unwashed, bony chest. The coat has no buttons, but, to make up for the loss, plenty of holes. One sleeve is torn off. Under the arm he carries a small package, which, at nightfall, serves him for a pillow.

Night falls with its shadows. The heaven is covered with black clouds. Eleven o'clock, and the noises of the world have died down to stillness. Suspended street-lanterns flicker hopelessly; moved by the wind and rain, they swing, and with them, round and about, vibrate objects of darkness.

On a corner Max rests against a lamp-post, the soaked body pressed against the pole. Over his face drops of moisture trickle down to his wet throat and breast. His tired eyes look into the dark distance.

Some twenty feet from him, at the door of a store, stands the officer of the beat. Their eyes meet with mutual unfriendliness, and gladly avoid each other. Max takes the hint;—on he moves

again, his ripped-up footwear leaving the pavement with gurgling splashes. A gaunt spectre, his shadow is cast upon the wet, shining sidewalk, now it shrinks, a misshapen dwarf, and now again, it spreads, a gigantic phantom; at last it dwindles to a mere nothing, to disappear with its owner in a hall-door. The unfortunate man crawls upon some rolled-up carpets under the staircase.—“Slumber, tired wanderer!”

* * *

Morning dawns. The janitor, an elderly, thick lipped, colored man, stealthily comes downstairs, stretching himself like a cat. He looks out of the door, blinking into the early sunshine,—broom in hand. Then he turns, and walks towards the pile of carpets, upon which Max is sleeping, his knees drawn up to his chin. In the semi-darkness the janitor prods the huddled heap with his investigating broom, and terror seizes him when the indistinct, gray form comes to life.

First he sees revealed the half of a face, which then turns to meet him in full. The thoroughly awakened sleeper looks about, and then rises to his feet, the janitor mustering him with hostile eyes. Casting a look upon the disarranged carpets the colored man exclaims: “What—the hell!—Say, man!—What have you done to the rugs, man?”

Max rubs his face, consigns the janitor to the everlastingly hot place, and walks towards the door. The janitor bars his way, looking for some kind of satisfaction, which Max is unwilling to give, and they come almost to blows. But steps are heard on the stairs, as the colored man stands with uplifted broom-handle. He remains in that position, motionless, looking up to see who might be coming.

A woman descends, and in her we recognize Sorka Feinberg. She looks questioningly from one to the other. Through the brain of Max flashes fully conscious recognition, when the janitor breaks in: “Look, lady, this poor white trash of a dog has spoiled all my rugs!” “If I am a dog, I shall bite off your ear!” retorts Max, with a step forward. “Go away, John!” the woman calls out. The janitor steps aside, and she looks full into the naggard face of the other man, her eyes becoming wider and wider in horrified recognition as she shrieks: “Oh, Max.m!” “That is me!—What about it?” Max snaps back, and his features assume such an expression of the sarcasm of despair, that she has to hold on to the bannister to keep from falling.

Max brushes the janitor aside, and walks out into the street, Sorka staring after him, near a collapse. Her pocketbook slips from the twitching fingers. The colored man picks it up and hands it back to her. A fifty cent piece makes the acquaintance of his vestpocket. She stands with bowed head, in tears. The janitor is quite embarrassed and at a loss what to do. Finally he rushes out, and across the street, where her father conducts a butcher-shop; and there he looks through the window.

A couple of women stand at the counter, fingering over the goods with inquisitive hands. One of them picks some tripe

from a platter, and begins to measure to her elbow, how many yards she might need for her household. Another looks deep into the eyes of a calf's head, and takes offence at the outstretched tongue.

Mr. Feinberg is cutting some meat, and issues stentorian command to his helper, who sits next to the ice box, in blood-stained garments, plucking a chicken, yawning, and occasionally, scratching himself vigorously by all means imaginable, kicking from himself, as far as possible, a pile of still unplucked fowl,—a desperate situation for a jewish butcherboy, of whom the chicken-lice are very fond.

From a railing, in front of the counter, lungs, livers, and the like, are suspended from hooks, and thick drops of blood drip, unnoticed, upon heads and shoulders of the haggling women.

Mr. Feinberg, a man of unclassic features, in a blood-stained coat and apron, round as a barrel. Upon a powerful, massive neck reposes a head, naturally with no evidence of brain, adorned with a black beard, a pronounced, fleshy nose, thick sausage-lips, jackass-ears, high pointed, pyramid-shaped forehead, and eyes—ah! eyes!—To paint them I should have to take a brush!—But now the possessor of all these charms moves, reaches with one hand in his bosom for a snuff-box, stuffs his nose with tobacco, but does not sneeze, merely wiping his nose with a bloody end of the apron.

The janitor raps on the window. Mr. Feinberg excuses himself to the customers, with a winning smile. In passing he wakes his help with a shout from a momentary, back-scratching siesta, and walks to the door. After a few remarks whispered into his ear, he hurries across the street, followed by the janitor.

* * *

Every city has some park or square frequented by its homeless. There our hero, at times, drags himself and sits down at the side of other human derelicts and types.

To the left of him is a social outcast, with a bloated face, uplifted to the sun, the lips half-opened in delight, displaying a cavern with a protruding, lone yellow-hued tooth. Some forty years old she is, with a hat, the shape of an old umbrella, turned sideways. The shoes are half unbuttoned. A pocketbook wound up tight with a cord, and of the size, and value, of the hat, a grotesque, dirty shawl over the shoulders. The skirt black, fringed, and torn, in parts, and a waist—ah! enough! The bosom heaves in deep waves over a trembling heart, and it heaves, and heaves!

To his right a man stretched out in comfort, some 35 years old, with a flat nose like a gander, a cap pulled down over his eyes. He sings, and snaps his fingers, to keep time. Maybe a member of the grand army of the down-and-outs.

Next to him we see another type of much interest. Dressed in accord with an art of his own: red pants, brown canvas shoes, three waists,—one on top of the other,—white gloves; in regal majesty one hand resting upon a cane. The face I do

not dare to paint, because it is God's masterpiece;—picture yourself a bulldog's likeness, or whatever you may choose in its place.

The law does not make allowance for all-to-much freedom; and a cop must earn his living with hard toil. "Come on! get up, you lazy beggars!" Unwillingly they arise, only to drop into their seats, again, after the majesty of the law has passed out of sight.

* * *

Some good day a gift is about to descend upon Los Angeles. Somewhere in California a freight train slows down its speed to take in water for the engine. From under a car issues a pair of feet, followed by other parts of the anatomy of Max. He keeps close to the ground, in eternal vigilance, to see if the path is free, and then he disappears, with turtive, quick steps. Wide and free are the highways of California; aimlessly wandering he moves on over the road leading to Palm Springs.

* * *

Another star has fallen. On a winter-evening we see Sorka stand under a window, wrapped in a thin Spring-coat. The wind angrily whirls about the snow. But she is deaf to its voice. A stranger, she stands, at a strange house, listening to some piano-playing. Inside it is warm, and she feels her heart-strings drawn to it. A hand reaches up, at the other side of the window, and pulls down the shade.

The cold drives her on. In the next block she halts in front of a bakery. The warmth, and the fragrant breath of fresh-baked bread hold her with a mighty pull. She is about to step in, fascinated by the frozen vapors oscillating at the door. But she remembers that she has not a cent to her name, and she passes on.

In the narrow path, plowed by human bodies through the high snowdrifts on the sidewalk, she collides with a man, at the next street-corner. He stops, as her pale face with its feverishly luminant eyes pleases him; and he looks her over from top to bottom, like an article for sale. A man,—cold and white like the frost, though dressed warm in an expensive fur-coat. Only one little spark holds him in touch with life:—woman. He takes her by the arm: "Come, and go with me. There it will be warm; and we will make hot chocolate." She looks up into his bloodless face. The snowflakes fall thicker.

In the dim light of a lantern, across the street, a phantom-like shadow of a man approaches, indistinct. All that is discernible is a white shawl, folded around his neck. As he comes to the lantern an impulse commands him to stand still, like rooted to the ground. The pensive sad face of a youth gazes into the direction of the two,—gazes and gazes,—until the two receding shadows, linked close together, are swallowed by the night.

A back-door opens in the morning. Unceremoniously Sorka is pushed out into the white, cold, glittering world. A glad winter-sun gilds her agonized features. With one hand she presses her heaving bosom, the other is closed tight over some

dollar-bills:—they mean food and shelter to her;—but at what a price?

* * *

A farmer in California, on the way home from a small town with a truck-load of provisions, notices, in the field of vision of the searchlight of his car, a dark spot at the road side. He stops his machine, and walks cautiously up to the curbing, where Max is sitting, famished and tired out.

"Where are you bound for, stranger?" "I am bound for the jungle." "Why? Are you a believer in nature?" "I don't believe in anything!" And he follows up the angry retort with curses. The farmer steps back frightened. "Who broke your heart, poor stranger?" Max jumps to his feet: "I don't want your pity!—Do you hear?—Go to the Devil!" An indistinct object in his uplifted hand, he walks up to the farmer, menacing, who rushes back to his machine, and is off in a minute. The tall, gaunt, threatening shadow is left alone, at the roadside. Night!—Sleep!—sleep! tired wanderer, somewhere under a tree.

Over the snow-capped mountains rises the morning sun, floods the world with a purple tint, and lights with it, also, upon the poor bundle of bones dressed in rags, advancing painfully. Exhausted, hardly alive, he plods over the dusty road, on, and ever on.

After many days of hunger, his lips parched with heat and thirst, he arrives in Palm Springs. He drags himself through the main street, which is the length of only a few blocks. A few grocery stores, a machine shop, a number of hotels, here and there, on both sides of the road, tents, and little wooden houses. Many tourists are in evidence, and they, with the home folk, and some Indians, constitute the inhabitants of the Valley of the Mockingbirds, cozily spread between the mountains, famous for its healing Sulphur Springs, and also, for its canyon, where the hermit lives.

As Max drags himself on, distrustful looks follow him from windows and porches. In the front of Logan's grocery,—the favorite hang-out of the local "respectable" idlers,—we see some of them sit or stand around, warming themselves in the sun like chickens. When he gets here he makes a halt,—willingless and unthinking,—in that condition of mind in which neither walking nor standing matters, as the strength for either is utterly spent.

"Who are you?" asks Demuth, a German carpenter, which question elicits no answer. Another asks him: "Who are you, stranger? What are you looking for? You look as if you had wandered a long way!" Instead of an answer the interrogated unfortunate man begins to sag and sway like a cornstalk in the wind and, unable to stand it any longer, the weary body collapses slowly on the spot. Huddled on the ground, Max rubs his face with a grimy hand and stares up helpless into the faces of the questioners.

An Indian drives by with a load of rocks. He beats his donkey with a whip, cunningly so that a glancing blow curls

also over the back of Max. All break out in laughter, except Demuth, who is 35 years old, a man of feeling, and who grits his teeth over the heartlessness of the Indian. With despising contempt he looks over all present. Then he turns to Max.

"Why did you take that?" The unfortunate man shrugs his shoulder, casts a helpless look around, and then admits: "I have no strength left,—the desert has sucked it all out of my bones." They search in each other's eyes with an understanding sympathy, two souls recognizing each other. "Can you get up?—Shall I help you?" Max nods consent. "Yes, help me!—I am stiff all over." Demuth bends down, and helpfully lifting him under his arms, he asks him: "Will you go with me?" To which query Max answers: "Take me anywhere,—all I want is sleep."

He is led away, followed by many pairs of unfeeling eyes. They pass another grocery, further up the street, then the little church, and to the right we see Demuth's house, in the shade of tall pepper trees. Big piles of lumber are stacked at the side of the house and in the rear of the yard. In front we see a tame skunk and an equally domesticated squirrel. Two tiny, playful kittens alternately chase either of the two, but when separated by the chase, one of the felines raises a yowl of distress, until filled with a new courage, by the return of its playmate, for a new raid upon the tamed creatures of the wild.

To Max it is all a blank. His kind leader conducts him to a cot and mattress under the pepper tree right in back of the house, gently helps him down, and the unfortunate man sinks into the dreamless sleep of utter exhaustion. While the sleeper is thus wrapped in merciful oblivion, Demuth trims his beard and hair.

An aged, mummy-like, wrinkled aboriginal appears in on the yard, picks out some pieces of wood from the scattered piles, walks up to the carpenter, but, instead of paying, he looks up to the sky with the words: "Tomorrow we will have a storm." Then he fastens a keen glance upon the sleeper, and up again to heaven, slowly repeating the words: "Tomorrow we will have a storm." Not saying another word he walks off,—a man of but few words, if any, like all of his race.

Now Demuth shaves the sleeper, who is steeped so deep in utter forgetfulness of self that even a cut in his cheeks could not have awakened him. His task accomplished, the carpenter leaves for the grocery. From there he issues with packages and parcels of clothing and eatables for his new friend.

The idle gossips on the porch are poking fun at him. "The Lord help you, Demuth,—you have a rich guest. Don't overfeed him with Swiss cheese,—you can't make a Dutchman out of him anyways." He cails them all bags of empty straw and resumes his way home, leaving the bunch convulsed with laughter over their imagined smartness.

* * *

On the following morning Max looks already different,—

almost like his own previous self, only he bears the imprint of aweful suffering. He sits at the window, watching the palms waved by the wind, and above them a heaven overhung with black clouds. And he mutters to himself: "A gray world!—When will there be light?"

Demuth, in a little distance, kneels in front of a stove, which he feeds with wood-shavings. He looks up to his guest with the query: "Will we have a storm?" Max shivers and, with another look upon the overcast heaven, replies: "Yes—mad winds!" The carpenter looks upon him intently: "Hm!—mad winds!—A strange expression from your lips,—are you a poet—a writer?" Max sighs heavy, a bitter smile curling his lips for a moment, and then he is once more lost in his own self.

Again his world of silent grief is invaded with the question: "Anyway, may I ask you what wind has brought you here?" Max looks around in silence, and meets a prodding flicker of distrust in the eyes of Demuth, a national heritage hard to overcome. With an acute pain our unfortunate man closes his eyes, Demuth catching himself in regret, remembering that cherries fall from the tree when ripe, and that one should not put coarse fingers into an open wound. The well-meaning carpenter suffers under his own tactless break, rises to his feet, puts on his coat, and, afraid to make another unwise step, he walks out of the room with a mumbled excuse that does hardly reach the ears of his guest.

As soon as he is left alone Max looks around, distressed and disturbed over the good-natured, but too inquisitive German. The unrest of the Russian drags at his heart, and pulls him irresistibly towards the door, he feebly resisting for a time. At last he grabs a stick leaning against the wall. A few passers-by meet him, and good-intentionally ask: "Where are you going to, stranger?—Look out!—A storm is approaching!" But on he treads, paying no attention to all queries.

The road is covered with sand. In mad pranks the wind whirls up dense clouds of dust, announcing the coming grim play of nature. A flash of lightning divides the heavens. Heavy single drops begin to fall. A few wolves of the desert avoid his searching glances like guilty souls. He increases his speed, though aimless—and purposeless. Ever darker it becomes, thicker the rain-drops, and lightning upon lightning crashes from the firmament. The wind wrestles with grotesque, spiny cacti, and nowis over that painful occupation.

Fast, and wicked, the night descends. It rains in torrents. A mighty thunder-clap reverberates in the echoes of the canyon. He abruptly halts, rooted on the spot, with bewildered looks into the surrounding chaos, and then he hurries on, approaching, so to say, the unknown end of a tedious journey. Clad in gray and vapors of dampness, the mountains loom up like gigantic trolls. Heaven and desert melt into a unit of plaintive sadness, and the inner life of Max blends with it all into a tragic trinity of sacred sorrow.

After urging on for a few miles, breasting the raging ele-

ments, he sits down upon a rock, the eyes fixed upon the darkness before him. His lips move: "Whereunto are you hunting me, you mad winds? Throw me down, if you are stronger than I." He lowers his head upon one arm, hiding his face, shivering of cold and pain. Somewhat relieved he gets up again and wanders on and on. Once in a while the lightning reveals, for a ghastly instant, a few head of cattle, emaciated by the drouth, huddled together, while in the near distance flare up the green lights of the eyes of famished coyotes; or again crumbling, bleached bones are illuminated, the tribute collected by the arid gods of the parching desert.

At a late hour he reaches, at the canyon's mouth, a dividing hill; from the slope of it he discerns the light issuing from the cabin of the hermit, and he stops for a moment at the unexpected sight. "Man everywhere,—even in the desert!" he exclaims in dismay and disgust, and is about to turn away, but in chafing obedience to an intuition he resumes his wandering.

He halts at the cabin of the hermit, examines the little home built of palm-logs, and then sits down upon a rock, across from the entrance. Accords from a guitar reach him, and intently he gazes upon the dimly-lit latticed door, in search for the source of the melody. And then his eyes follow the path leading down into the canyon, in whose depth a rivulet hastens on with a resistless impetus, like a dying, faithful soul urging to confession. To this is added the Bacchanal of the slashing and crashing of the palms.

With a shudder he looks away and his eyes rest again upon the latticed door to the unknown hermit's retreat. "There lives a man who will not cause you pain," an internal voice calls to him repeatedly, almost audibly. "Flee from him!" a second voice interjects. "Disappear in the dark canyon. Nature may rage in wrath and terror; but she is frank and open, and honest, not dissimulating like man."

A winding narrow trail leads into the canyon. He begins to give heed to the warning voice and is about to follow its advice. At that moment the door opens; a flood of light issues, dimly illuminating the stove and the dark human shape not far from it. A tremor seizes Max, and he blinks towards the open doorway, from which steps rapidly the lone inhabitant, the hermit, clad only in an abbreviated pair of coarse pants; rugged like a tree of the forest, hairy and bearded, of medium size, with a splendidly developed body; and there they stand, measuring each other with their eyes.

"Who is there?" rings out a soft, melodious voice, but Max does not answer. "Who are you? Where do you come from and where are you going to?" "What do you ask for? Don't you know as yet, where man comes from, and what he is seeking?" "Yes, you are right, and my door is open to you." "That is not enough!—Open your heart!" It is open, don't you feel it? Thereupon is silence. Then they walk to the cabin, to look upon each other in the light, and their hands meet in a firm grip.

The hermit leads Max into his small, yet neatly and tastefully appointed retreat. Entering you see a few shelves with books, a small stove; on the walls are picture and clippings, some instruments, specimens of Indian pottery, and a goodly number of curios, made from cacti and palmsticks, is in evidence everywhere. A small kerosene-lamp bathes all in a warm light. From a cross-beam dried apples and risps with palmseed are suspended.

Max looks over his new friend thoroughly, and best he is impressed with the luminous, large, blue eyes; but from the marvelously chiseled, beautiful features occasionally issues a cold chill that repulses him. The hermit leads Max to the little bed, and assists him in getting off the wet clothes. While his host is thus occupied, the gaze of our wanderer rests upon a crystal in a velvet casing, in the center of the small table. He refreshes his body with some fruit, while the hermit musters him with pity, with the sunken cheeks and mournful eyes. He begins to play and mild and soothing accords enwrap the lacerated, tired soul of Max, who stretches himself out upon the bed and falls in slumber. When the hermit finishes playing, his guest is fast asleep. The hermit remains, still and motionless. All through the night the blue eyes are fastened upon the sleeper.

* * *

Esther fades away like a flower exhaling its delicate perfume. The child grows up babbling little words, and crawls all over the dirty floor of the small room, under the supervision of a mother who is unable to manage her own self except in the work of her pen. Tannenbaum has aged terribly; he is bent and gray. The child is his joy, and its tears are his own. He begins to talk over Esther to join him for California. She gives her consent with the attitude of a being that does not care where its coffin might rest in the end. Thus they make preparation for the journey.

When the previously mentioned literary parasite gets wind of it, he hurries to the spot, with his well-known portefeuille filled with creations not his own. His slippery tongue twists in the crooked mouth full of lies. The lips overflow of praise and best wishes, a genuine gusher of untruths. But all the while he remains true to his ghoulish profession, rubs nervously his parched cheeks, and then tries to haggle down the price to be paid for her creations of verse, while he fingers the pages like scrap-paper. She gives him no answer and wearily turns away from him.

Tannenbaum transacts with him the further sale. Our literary "Mantis religiosa" musters up a ready-made sympathy for leave-taking, poetically kisses Esther's hand, and retreats to the door, with sounding, empty phrases. The Jewish poet looks upon him with loathing. A resolute light flares up in his eyes as he leads the blood- or rather brain-sucker out of the door. Once there, he gets a firm hold of his neck, hisses under his breath: "Once for all, let me settle accounts with you!"—gives him a splendid kick, and wishes a happy journey to the end of the stairs.

On the following day the two health-and-peace-seeking people, with the little child, are on their way to the land of sunshine.

* * *

Max adapts himself to his hermit-life. He lets beard and hair grow untrimmed. Around the loins a piece of canvas, the rest of the body exposed to the air, well recuperated, and bronzed by the sun to a copper-hue. His time he spends to assist the hermit in the manufacture of curios for tourists. Straight palmsticks are the material used. Besides, he helps in washing cacti and drying them in the sunshine. Incidentally he is taught to play the guitar. In short, it is like two lives flowing into the same channel.

At times the past surges up in his memory, and he weeps and curses, until the hermit pats him gently on head and shoulders, with glistening tears, and reaches for his instrument, with soothing music to give peace to the troubled soul.

The tourists are shunned by Max like death itself. Already, when he sees them come in the distance, he flees to the canyon, to keep away until they are gone. When his sharpened senses tell him that the air is free from the smells of smoke, tobacco, and ladies' perfumes and powders, he comes out of his hiding-place, breathing in the pure air deep through quivering nostrils. Thus passes the time.

* * *

Imperturbably the hand of fate writes on, filling the pages of time with the record of the grim play of destiny. The pilgrims in search of rest and health are led by its threads to Palm Springs, and they settle down in a little shingle-house nearby the road. Tannenbaum plays most of the time with the small child, listens to its babbling speech, and shakes his sorrowful head which perceives but obstacles in the path of life, with no way out, which makes it only worse. Esther passes her lifeless life in a little garden in the rear of the house, merely upheld, but not restored to health, by the glorious climate.

Tannenbaum busies himself in the kitchen to make dinner ready. The little child is asleep. All preparations being made, the old man steps out in the garden in the rear of the house to call Esther. He sees her favorite seat vacant and finds her gone. With a puzzled mien he looks all over for her, and then goes to the front of the house, out into the road, looking anxiously in every direction. In the dim distance, in the direction of the canyon, he catches a glimpse of a disappearing object, fluttering in the wind, like the end of her shawl.

Gladsomely relieved, he takes a deep breath, and then follows in the wake as fast as his old feet can carry him. Once more he stops for a breathing-spell, and again he shuffles along. "Esther! Esther!" he shouts. Already he catches up with her, but, lo—his coming draws her back from an indistinct, powerfully urging impulse, back into her only dimly conscious shadow-life. The invisible thread tying her heart-strings to the soul of Max had been guiding her hasten-

ing steps, but the good old man's intrusion had broken that thread.

A terrible change is reflected in her wan face. With mute pleading Tannenbaum looks into her eyes. But these are filling with hot tears. "Why don't you let me go where my feet want to carry me—so light—ever on and on—to the mountains, whence a call comes to my heart?" "You would perish, my daughter. Come back with me to the house; your child is crying for you!" "The child is crying?" she repeats, still half under the compelling power to go on. With gentle persuasion the old man prevails in the end, and together they walk back toward the house.

* * *

Max, in the course of his recuperation, becomes almost his old self again, and is filled with an urge for activity—a craving to mingle once more with crowds, and he considers leaving his present abode. The hermit-life has no more satisfaction for him. The thought of leaving fascinates him with the lure of an unrevealed promise. "Yes, I shall go,—I owe something to mankind, and something is owed to me. I have a mission. I cannot pass all my life amongst lizards and chipmunks. Enough!"

After some brief altercation with the hermit he begins to trim his beard, and the host, giving in, helps in the work with his own scissors. Filling a knapsack with simple necessities, the good man hands Max a little pocket-money, and they take a hearty leave from each other.

On Logan's porch the local gossips in pants loaf around as usual. Demuth is also there, looking over the pages of a newspaper. Instinctively he looks up, and his eyes meet Max, who is coming down the road. Quickly he rises and goes to meet him, and in a friendly greeting they pass the arms over each other's shoulder. "Where are you going?" asks Demuth of him. "To the city—to Los Angeles." "Won't you step into my house for a while?" "No, thanks, I don't want to lose any time."

A wrinkled, ragged human derelict, sitting on the rail, sidles up to Max, malignantly looking him over, and spits out a big quid of tobacco. Max, with a smile, gently pats him on the shoulder and turns again to the carpenter to say good-bye, Demuth wishing him good luck on the way. The town loafers nudge each other with their shoulders or elbows, commenting under their breath on "chickens coming home to roost," or the like. But no one pays any attention to them.

Tannenbaum, with the child, is engaged in play. The little tot holds up to his inspection a glittering stone, and as he bends over to see better the shining object, Max strides by, unseen and unheeded, the invisible gates of the soul not standing open to all persons at all times.

Our wanderer progresses only a few steps, when a passing automobile offers him a ride, which he gladly welcomes. Demuth, from the store porch, follows with pensive eyes the machine gradually disappearing in the distance.

The door of the little house opens, and out steps, slowly, Esther, dressed in white, with eyes wide open like in a trance. She looks, and looks, and then she kneels down in front of Tannenbaum, with the plaintive query: "Maxim! Oh, where is Maxim?" But the good old man only shakes sadly his head, and then they both weep.

* * *

The hermit reads in a book, but his thoughts are more with the friend who parted from him. A sigh escapes from his lips; he looks about, forlorn, and realizing that he is alone indeed, he tries to resume his reading in earnest.

Between two pages of the book in his hand he finds a slip of paper written with eight lines in Russian characters. Uneasily he shakes his head: "Poor Max, he might need it. I'll hurry down into the valley; he probably stays with Demuth for the night." Quickly he makes up his mind, puts on his sandals, and is on his way to the little town.

Arrived there, he rushes to Demuth's home, panting, calling out even before he opens the door: "Hello, Demuth!" The carpenter looks upon him astonished: "What are you breathing so hard for?" "Oh, I have been in a hurry. Where is Max?" "He is not with me. He did not even want to step into my house for a minute. An auto picked him up. By this time he must be, already, quite a distance from here. What is the matter?" "Ah, perhaps nothing serious. I found a piece of paper with writing. I think it is in Russian. Maybe he needs it. I am sorry that I am unable to read it." And with a hopeless resignation he looks in front of him.

Demuth thinks for a moment and then speaks up eagerly: "Do you want to read it? That is easy! Russian people live quite nearby in town who have only recently arrived." "Well, but that would be unfair. Yet, on the other hand, I am quite anxious to know what is in it." With the remark: "Well, suit yourself," Demuth resumes the work of cutting up some cabbage for his next meal. In a sudden decision the hermit calls out: "All right! Lead me to them!" "Come on!"—and out they go.

Esther receives them. Tannenbaum is absorbed deeply in a book, but at the arrival of the callers an undefinable, terrible unrest seizes his soul. She asks them to be seated. The hermit casts a glance upon Demuth, who understandingly rises from his chair and leaves the room with an excuse.

Like a precious little bird the slip of paper is fingered tenderly by the man of solitude, and then proffered to Esther with the query: "Could you, perhaps, read this for me? It is in Russian." She reaches for it. Tannenbaum looks up to listen. She sits down and proceeds:

"Where the roses exhale fragrance,
Where my footsteps are effaced,
Where dry shrubs and thorns do penance,
Tears I sowed and pain I raised.
Where the sounds of youth are ebbing,

Those tracks are lost, long, long ago;
But where mad winds are throbbing, sobbing
Through all eternity, I go.

—Max Blochmann."

The hand with the sheet sinks down into her lap, and as she leans back into her seat, the whole gamut of emotions from hope to despair, from fear to exquisite joy and happiness, pass over her pallid features. Then of a sudden she frowns and closes her eyes tight. "Ah!—too much light! It blinds me—it blights my soul!" she whispers. With the left hand she passes over her eyes and then presses it to her heart, as her chin sinks slowly upon her breast. "I am so tired,—I want to sleep,—I am so happy! Maxim! My Maxim! Found at last!" she whispers. She feels something tears to pieces in her innermost soul; and as time and eternity vanish to her, the little worn-out heart unable the stand the pressure any longer, she closes her eyes forever.

Tannenbaum rushes up to her side despairingly, trying to bring her back to consciousness. The dumbfounded hermit looks about in the room for some water, at last locating some. But Esther's sufferings are ended,—mad winds can harm her no more. The Jewish poet sinks at the feet of the poor body, sobbing bitterly. The hermit steps backward, hesitating, with agonized features, pressing both clenched fists over his heart. At the door he hastens out, hunted by furies.

* * *

Her last resting-place, a flat piece of desert-land, with cacti and rocks here and there, and mountains in the distance. Tannenbaum throws the last shovel of soil upon the fresh grave, lifts the child up from the ground, and rocking it in his arms, he tries to pacify it: "Sh-h! Don't cry, you little orphan of the world." A few sympathetic people from the valley, with Demuth, and the hermit with bowed head in mystical mourning, bear mute witness to the desert's failure to answer to the crying of the child.

Tannenbaum turns his sad and lifeless face to the hermit; a smile, bitter like gall, playing upon his lips. "You! You!" groans his heart. "You holy one have killed her!" The chin of the hermit sinks upon his penitent breast. A milder expression overspreads the poet's face: "No, poor man, it is not your fault," and he hands him a booklet from his pocket, Esther's verses, which the hermit takes with reluctant fingers. With the child in his arms, Tannenbaum turns and walks off,—a tall, black, lonesome shape in the glaring sunshine. Gradually, the mourners scatter, and the hermit remains alone at the new sand-hill heaped over a broken heart.

Late the same evening the hermit is bent over the small volume of verses handed him by Tannenbaum. He looks at Esther's picture, pensively muttering: "A virgin soul! A virgin!" and then he resumes the interrupted reading. In the canyon soughs a storm-wind; the heaven is heavy-hearted, about to shed its blessing tears. The hermit reads on, and the farther he advances in the pages the expression of his face

undergoes a tremendous change. He casts bewildered looks in every direction of his abode, all of a sudden, almost magically, a stranger to his environment, muttering to himself: "What am I doing here?"

A painful awakening flashes through his brain. "Hell!" he exclaims, with right hand clutching his chin, in terror of his own self. Alert he rises, scans, with astonished looks, the holy pictures on the walls, saying: "What? Has that kept me here for these thirteen years?" And he begins feverishly to tear them off.

In this work of haste his fingers touch accidentally the scissors on the table. Seizing them with a firm hand, he begins to trim his long beard, cuts off the curls that hang low down over his shoulders, and what he prided himself in sinks to the ground like a shower of golden autumn-leaves.

"Thirteen years! Thirteen years!" he mutters, and laughs hysterically. "Let's make an end of this farce! Where is the kerosene?" He reaches for the bottle in the corner and spills its contents upon bed, and walls. Then he grabs the lamp from the table, applies its flame to the kerosene-soaked spots of the room, snatches the precious booklet off the table, and runs like a madman out of the blazing house.

He speeds on in the direction of the valley, in his mad rush stumbling and falling, tearing his clothes, and cutting his limbs on cacti and thorn-bushes. Panting for breath he halts, and faces the flames enveloping his abode: "Burn! Burn, you den of darkness! At last you give me light!" And his features are overspread with a joy as if the burning flames were fanning his soul afire with a cool, refreshing breeze. The walls collapse with a brilliant display of sparks, and darkness descends upon the scene.

The early sun gilds the mountain-tops, and glistens in the dewdrops of the desert-cemetery. The hermit-that-was rouses himself from his vigil at the foot of the grave of Esther, the booklet of verse in hand,—a precious heritage. With exultation he looks up to the morning sun, then tenderly down to the new grave, and calls out: "At last I have found myself, and the work cut out for me,—thanks to you, broken-heart-at-rest! God is ever with the strongest, the winners in life. My stand shall be at the side of the losers in life, the weak." High he lifts his head and strides into the world of action.

* * *

Mere man provides for homeless cats and shelterless dogs, but seldom for the unemployed. With the knapsack on the back, Max roams aimless through the streets of the Angel City, and ever tighter he draws his belt for quite obvious reasons.

A certain hotel in Main Street, conducted by the Volunteers of America, "fifteen cents a night, with free bath," it says. And when the small price is not forthcoming you stretch out your limbs in the Reading-Room, upon a bench, dreaming your dreams of prosperity, with some magazine or

the elbow as pillow, breathing in the noxious exhalations of dirty spittoons and a filthy floor. But that can only be done when the manager is in a good humor, which is but rarely the case. Possessor of a funny-front, he tries to keep it up by overeating; he vents the ensuing suffering upon the unfortunate home-and-penny-less, whom he bounces unceremoniously into the street. Max gets the experience of such impolite treatment. He picks himself up in indignation, puts his hands in his pockets, crosses the street leisurely, unheeding of the angry tootings of automobiles in a hurry, and turns around the corner, going West.

* * *

Sunset Park is a fine place to be in if one is not hungry. A healthy being sickens at the hunger-medicine. It is late in the evening when Max sits down upon one of the benches. He watches the hazy, fleeting shadows for a while, and then loses himself in thought.

A larger shadow detaches itself from the shifting, foggy background and glides up toward the same bench. A trembling seizes Max at the sound of the disconnected mutterings and curses which pain his ears like the scratching of a nail on a window-pane. And the newcomer falls heavily into her seat. We recognize in her, Sorka Feinberg. Slightly under the influence of liquor, in gaudy attire of coarse temptation, she wipes her nose with one sleeve, and keeps on heaping abuse upon a blonde man who obsesses her muddled brain.

Max turns his face sideways, bending forward, to get a good look of her; but all his vision can picture is a sullied window-frame, with cobwebbed, broken pane, the gaping holes stuffed up with filthy rags. Her alcoholic breath fills him with nausea, and he moves away a little. She raves on, that the park belongs to her; that people are tearing off all its flowers, and that the idea of four hundred buttons on women's shoes was stupid. Then she weeps and begins to beat her breast. Gazing up to her neighbor, she mumbles again: "Stupid! I need no silk corset! Stupid!" Max feels powerless to go away.

One more shade condenses to the left, takes definite form approaching, and sits down in calm and silence, next to Max, surveying the two other corners present of the triangle of life. Neatly dressed; in the thirties, of medium size, brunet; a white shawl carefully folded around his neck; with eyes athirst for Schopenhauer's Nirvana.

He begins to smoke, and offers Max also a cigarette, who declines with thanks. "Take one and smoke," insists the new arrival, "or you are a dog!" Max raises his eyebrows sharply: "Why am I a dog?" "Because that is my opinion of mankind in general. To hell with it! Tomorrow all will be ended. By rights I should spit any man in the face,—yet I offer him a cigarette!" The fallen woman is silenced, and repeats with a petulant voice: "Stupid!"

"What is your trouble, stranger?" turns Max to the disciple

of Schopenhauer. The interrogated man leans back into his seat, crosses his legs one over the other: "Oh, I am all right," he comments, reaches in his coat pocket, calmly pulls out a revolver and adds: "You see, it is my birthday. At one o'clock it was that I saw the light of the world. It is the hour I hate, and at that hour I shall pass out again." The woman again mutters: "Stupid!"

Max asks him if he is tired of life, getting for answer: "Yes; the devil take it all!" "Stupid!"—it sounds once more from the woman.

The stranger strikes a match to re-light his cigarette, casts a sidelong glance upon Max, querying: "Down and out? Hungry? Eh?" "Yes, hungry!" "And you don't delve into garbage cans?" "No, not yet." The woman utters another "Stupid!" with babbling lips.

Max heaves a sigh over the sufferings of mankind. "I ask you once more, are you hungry?" And Max snaps back: "Didn't I tell you? Yes, very hungry!" "And in the garbage cans?" "That I cannot do!" "Stupid!"—it sounds again from his left.

This time it catches the ear of the stranger, who eagerly bends forward with the words: "Ah, you have your sweetheart with you?" Max does not answer, and for a moment silence descends upon them, each pondering over the irony of fate.

"Do you want money?" asks the newcomer, pulls a wad of banknotes from his breast pocket, stuffing it into the pockets of Max with the expostulation: "Take it, or I'll throw it away; you are welcome to it." And then he laughs bitterly,—the laughter of death in the aspect of puny life. "Stupid!" falls in like an echo the unconscious comment of the fallen woman.

The prospective candidate for suicide rises from his seat, stretches himself to his full length, and exclaims: "All is done and ready. Now, I assign everything to hell. Mankind seems so rotten that even in the face of death I can throw a bone. Good night!" He proffers a thin, shadowy hand. Max looks up to him in pity. "Wait! I am so sorry for you. Let us go together." With these words he bends over the woman, slips a bill into her hand, to the accompaniment of a mumbled "Stupid!" of the derelict, rises from the bench, and together they walk away.

The woman gets up and proceeds toward the lamp-post, where she lifts the note to her eyes for a closer inspection: "Five! That's right, you stupid idiots!" Upon her face are scant remnants of past beauty; the hair is disheveled; the blouse partly unbuttoned, displaying a youthful throat. The skirt is not laced, the hand inadvertently slipping into that wrong opening when she tries to pocket the bill; and thus she reaches deep and deeper, only stopping in the hopeless attempt with another: "Stupid! After all, the old place is the best!" With that remark she tries to slip the bill into her stocking. As luck has it, she wears men's socks. For a

moment she ponders; then, in quick decision, pulls off a shoe, puts in the bank note, and, hugging shoe and all to her bosom, she tipsily totters off toward the entrance of the park, swallowed by the gray shadows of the night.

* * *

At the corner of Sixth Street, just outside of the park, Max and his companion come to a stop. "If that is the case I have nothing more to say," he exclaims, with a depressed voice. "Enough! I am utterly disgusted with everything. When you go uptown you'll find my diary at the given address; that will tell you all about it. Let's shake hands and say good-bye, forever. Good night, then"—and he passes on.

Max stands like transfixed by awful thoughts until the sounds of the steps of the suicide-to-be are muffled by the distance; only in his ears still throbs the word—"forever." A vivid pain tortures his body and soul. He turns slowly into Sixth Street, walking East; but the realization that a human being is about to go down to oblivion brings him to a sudden halt. His hair stands on end, and he struggles to cast a heavy weight off his chest in order to be able to get relief in shrieking out his pain and terror. In the end he begins to run through the silent streets with horrified shouting: "A man is going down! Help! Help! Make a light! Awake! A man is going down!"

A policeman rushes around the corner: "Say, what's the matter with you? Are you sick?" And he tries to treat him with his club. "No, I am well enough; I only got scared at something." "You bum Go, and beat it mighty quick." A street car passes by and is boarded by Max, who takes a seat in the front, in the neighborhood of three types.

Behind him sits a man who takes life different from the general run. Fairly drunk, a cap way back of the forehead, a blond forelock protruding, a flat nose, small, shifting, bead-like eyes, the eyebrows shaggy but thinned out, pock-marked cheeks, the teeth and the moustache of the same color. This bibulous head belongs to a six-foot body. He breaks into a song, and with his fingers he begins to beat time upon the back of Max: "Trala-trila-lala! I lost my wife—trili-trala!" Max turns around his head: "You lost your wife?" "Yes; she died—tralala-tram-tram."

To the right of Max are two different specimens, each in a separate seat. The first is a nightwatchman with his lunch-box, apparently all nose, ears, and tobacco-pipe. He counts some coins and exclaims in disgust: "Missing again—by gorra! She'll die with that habit, or my name ain't Mike!" He gets wrought up over the discovery, and in order not to get in bad humor, he starts some deep-breathing exercises, filling himself with air to look like a barrel, exhaling with the sound of a pair of bellows in action, and finally gasping from stabbing pains in his lower back: "It is the bunk, that Mazdaznan Method! It is all the bunk!"

The other sample of humanity, back of him, is a Jewish

junk-dealer, short and rotund like a pumpkin, a more or less shapeless loaf of dough; maybe he'll be perfect in the next incarnation! He is dressed in the latest style of Paris. One eye is partly overgrown with flesh, but that does not hamper him in doing thorough ocular work over the pictures of movie actresses in a magazine.

He smacks his lips, his Panama hat rhythmically moving up and down: "Ai—ai—ai! Some womens!—regular peaches! A sin to look on them—enough!" With this he lays down the magazine and tries to look out of the window. Temptation! Even the hands seem to have eyes—the fingers caressingly close over the pictures, and again he holds the offending pages up to his eye: "Gewalt!—you are naughty, Abraham! Shame upon you!" And he slings the object of this worked-up horror out of the window, wiping his hands, mad over his weakness.

Obeying some impulse, Max steps off the car, and the drunken Pole does likewise. It is late downtown. Most of the stores are closed; but that does not hamper the business of an old man who cries out the service of his telescope, at ten cents a peep at the moon.

A drunkard, his coat torn in the back up to his neck, pays the price, takes a look, and shoots down three moons at one peep. The bibulous man at the heels of Max, in a helpful mood, slaps the star-gazer on the back, and down they go—gazer, telescope, moons and all, while the provender of popular astronomy raises a howl of distress.

Max helps to place the luckily, undamaged moon-shooter back upon its tripod. The owner is exuberant of thankfulness, filling the ears of Max with moon-lore galore, and offers him a free demonstration, which is declined in firm kindness.

The exhilarated astronomical amateurs, in the meanwhile, stand, leaning back to back, the one disclaiming to see anything at all, while the other keeps on counting moons with his fingers, moons that come and go ad infinitum.

After getting from the scientific peddler some information on where to get a room at a reasonable price, Max leaves the free show and goes on his way.

* * *

Some months later. Be careful and look out for your steps—the stairs are rotten. And protect your nose with a handkerchief; but do not rely on the railings. A step or two more,—and there you are! The door to the right leads to Max's dwelling place.

It is evening. A small gas jet casts a poor light upon the gray furniture, a dirty window, a bed, a table, a few copy-books and books. Upon the table a milk-bottle with a few carnations. Max examines a pair of torn trousers, and reaches for needle and thread sticking in the wall.

From the next door rings out the song of a beautiful melancholy voice. It is Lilith, whose life is a tragedy in itself. She has married a man of learning, who digs himself in, all

day, in his piles of books. They have a thirteen-year-old son, who is continually sick. Yes, she was an artist of much promise, at her time, and then she made the mistake of her life.

She sits at her child's bedside, pale like wax, with some traces left of a lost beauty, and she sings her beloved soothing song to put the little boy to sleep. The bedroom is small, poorly furnished, and dark. Through a crack of a door a torturing streak of light filters in from the adjoining room, where her husband is absorbed in his books. She looks upon the Will-o'-the-wisp, upon the child, and then into her own desolate heart; and she sings, and weeps, in turn, her grief, her voice and her yearning into a hauntingly sweet accord is bound to drive anyone into insanity,—anyone but him!

He, in the adjoining room, does not hear: Mr. Daniels, all forehead, with eye-sockets, to all appearances, molded with a first, the five-foot tall body draped in a long robe that reaches to his knees; the naked, hairy feet hidden in slippers; the head, crammed already with knowledge, searches and seeks.

Melancholy and lonesomeness grip the heart of Max, and the song seems familiar to him. "And who," he asks himself, "has suffered so much as to have to sing a tune like this? Who can it be?" He does not know his neighbors, yet he feels drawn to them as by a psychic magnet. He decides upon making their acquaintance.

Rap, rap; Mr. Daniels opens the door, stretches out his heavy head, balancing at the end of a long, thin neck; and Max makes a courteous bow: "Good evening. I am your neighbor. I am lonesome; am I welcome?" Mr. Daniels smiles: "Sure; step inside."

Next to the door stands a box, with a pail of water on top—plumbers are too high-priced! Not far from it a pile of nondescript rubbish; on the floor potato-peelings and orange-skins; rubbish, rubbish everywhere; all of it grotesquely intermixed with books, books, and more books; books on the table, books on chairs, books in boxes and on boxes, books on the floor, with filth and rubbish, and over it all floods merrily, from the other room, the sad lullaby.

Mr. Daniels surveys his visitor critically, and with a smile of inspiration he delves into one of the shelves, returning with two volumes. "Ah, young man, I have just the right kind of books for you. Here is 'The Gadfly' by Voynich, a mighty powerful story; and here is a masterpiece of soul-analysis, 'The Devil's Children,' by Dostojewsky. Take them and you'll enjoy the reading immensely."

Max reaches for the volumes mechanically, but his ears listen to the soaring song of sadness; his soul blends with the tune, and his heart weeps with Lilith. He asks Mr. Daniels: "From what poet is that song Madam is singing?" "Poet?" exclaims Mr. Daniels in eagerness, lifting his body to its full height, his features beautified by the rapturous enthusiasm of a connoisseur. "Poet, you ask? Why, that was written by a woman. Too bad she had to die so young; she might have

become the greatest poetess of all times! Oh, she was a genius! Wait a minute—I'll show you." And with these words he delves into another shelf, digging, while Max listens to the simple words of the slumber-song:

"Cry, cry, little one;
Winds, cheer my little son!
Winds, blow—blow—blow—blow;
Carry far my flicker-snow.
Float—float in the air,
Through gray and misty atmosphere.
Sobbing winds—oh, what a choir!
Souls, they fade, for evermore."

"Here it is!" Mr. Daniels brings him back to earth. "Some poetess!" And hands him the little volume. Max opens it, and his eyes meet Esther's picture on the first page. The world turns black before his eyes, and he feels like torn to shreds and scattered broadcast all over the world. "Ah! The cup is overflowing!" he mutters, the book slips from his fingers, and he almost collapses in a faint, trying to hold on to the table in his fall, nearly overturning it with all its heaps of books.

Mr. Daniels is quite frightened by the inexplicable incident. helps Max to his feet, leads him across the hallway to his room, places him upon the bed, and applies cold water to his forehead and temples, entirely at a loss to understand what has actually happened.

Max regains his consciousness, slowly sits up in bed and buries his face in his hands, in an abandon of grief. Mr. Daniels is unable to get the meaning of it all, shakes his head in pity, and, not finding any appropriate words to say, he softly walks out and leaves Max alone with his sorrow.

Night, and a dream! He wanders miles and miles through a long, high-arched, subterranean gallery. At last he reaches a doorway leading into an immense hall, lighted by an orange glow. It is all empty but for a lounge draped in green in its center. He reposes on it his tired body and closes his eyes.

Two shapes of women, adorned in white, detach themselves from the background and approach. One lays a sheet of paper and a goose-quill upon his breast. The other form stands at his side, with gentle arm lifts up his head, and holds a goblet to his lips, saying: "Drink! This will do you good—heart-and-soul drops mixed together!" He drinks with a visible struggle in his face. At last he succeeds in opening his eyes, and finds himself alone in his room. He rubs the sleep from his eyes, walks to the table, opens the gas-jet wide, and sits down to write.

That night through he suffered the pain which heralds the birth of a creator. With wounded heart and soul he writhes on the floor, the fingers closed tight over the written pages, staring upon the manuscript. His pressed lips slowly move in an almost inaudible, agonized muttering: "Is there a God?—Is there a God?" All the senses of his tortured body are

strained taught like ropes in their intent search for an answer through all the depth and width of the universe, his quivering body twisting like a worm. But all in vain:—all that comes back to him is the faint echo of his unanswered, anxious query: Is there a God?"

Fold him to your living bosom, good mother night, witness of his struggle. Give him peace,—oh quiet night!

* * *

Time passes on. A park, a bench, the sun up high, and Max with a pencil and paper. Our friend is not aware, as yet, that a fratricidal war is dividing the world into two gigantic, hostile camps. Purified in the forges of pain, having lived in the deepest recesses of life, he seems to have reached its summit, about to solve its mysteries. Only untainted love flows from his soul. "I forgive thee, mankind, for thou art sick!" With these hearty words he has finished a tale, and presses the manuscript to his heart. His furrowed, martyred features are laved in a softening spiritual fluid, as if bathed in the sweet fragrance of flowers, and he feels like a man re-born.

But his re-birth occurs at a bad time, at a time consuming mankind in the fires of a man-made hell. He knows nothing thereof,—a providence seems to have kept from him the tidings that two enemies have been calling up, in agony, to the same God.

"Extra!—Extra!!—The Germans invade . . . !!" calls out the shrill voice of a street vender. Max strains his wits to comprehend the meaning of the man's call, but no inner chord in him vibrates with the intelligence of the portentious news, and, pencil in hand, he resumes some retouching of his story.

On the bench opposite of Max are seated two well-dressed, elderly men; one of them with an "ear-crutch" into which his companion tries to shout the latest war news. On the path between the benches a splendidly-built little boy marches on in a quick-step;—arms and feet in fullest athletic harmony, preparing his little body for the profession of a good, healthy respectable loafer.

The man shouting the news to his deaf companion loses patience over his failure to make himself understood, throws the paper disgusted on the ground, and totters off, rubbing his aged and aching back. The man with the "ear-crutch" picks the paper up, adjusts his glasses, and tries to read the news himself, moving the sheet to and from his eyes in vain effort. The type is too small for his walking-glasses. Dismayed he tears off the corner with the latest telegrams, and painfully hobbles off.

An officer of the law, living up to the full measure of his duties, is on the look-out for slackers. Max looks certainly suspicious to him. A young man to sit and write!—that can't be permissible;—young men must fight in these days! He watches him through one eye, takes a better look at him with the other and then steps up to him.

Intuitively Max looks up with an inquiring glance. "Do you

have a registration card?" "A what?" "A card." Max shakes his head: "I have no cards." "I am an officer,—jokes aside,—show me your card!" "Which card?" Say, you saphead; you are not going to make a fool out of me!" Max looks at him with increased curiosity. "That's the limit!" bellows the policeman, "come on you slacker!" Max is utterly bewildered and as yet unable to figure it out, why an officer should drag him along by the arm, and heap abominations upon him.

* * *

In camp they can not do anything with him, because he is a being by all evidences devoid of a consciousness of his own body, absolutely unable to stop the unceasing working of his brain.

Right back of "No Man's Land."—Max peels potatoes. It feels good to sit in the open, upon a bench, cutting the potatoes mechanically into a large pan;—the head needs not take part in the work.

Not far from him three dough-boys are busy cleaning their rifles;—a Yankee, a Mexican and an Irishman. The Mexican throws an angry look upon Max. "Boys!" he exclaims, "this holy ghost gets my goat. Let's beat him up;—he looks too healthy to trim vegetables. There must be a nigger in the woodpile." The Yankee seconds the motion, but the Irishman is humane and declines to have any part in the "sport." "Let's go to it," calls out the Mexican, walks up to Max, takes him by the arm, and leads him a little distance.

"Let me get a swing at him first!" proposes the Yankee. "Go ahead!—he may not like chili!" Max stands quiet as if listening to an argument that did not concern him in the least. The Yankee places himself in a fighting position, now advancing the right fist, and now, again, guarding with the left, as if his opponent were about to attack him. But, far from so doing, Max merely gazes upon him quite unconcerned. He receives a blow in the face which wakens a subtle understanding, but as yet he seems undecided for any action. The Yankee wants to give him another, but his awakening conscience won't let him: "Hang it!—I can't do it,—I have no cause for it!"

The Mexican chimes in: "You sentimental fool!—I'll give him the finishing touches!" And the man from across the Rio Grande, to whom beatings come natural like the licking of his chops with a shifty tongue, begins to work his bunched-up fingers, as if he had dummy before him. When a fist comes close to his face, Max dodges with his head, not of strategy, but by instinct, and by experience which tells him that blows hurt.

The Irishman is sick of the whole affair, praying in his heart that Max might get a grip upon himself. When the body suffers too much, the instinct of self-defense is wakened in the end. The looks of Max try to fathom the eye-balls of the man who hurts him, and his eyes are fascinated by and fastened upon by the bare throat of his tormentor. A violent blow in the face, that makes the blood spurt, rouses the slum-

bering beast in him. His hands rise up to take a part in the fray. In the next moment his fingers are, like iron tongues, dug deep and tightened around the throat of his antagonist, all of it happening so unexpectedly sudden that, when the two astonished companions are able to come to the Mexican's assistance, he is squirming already upon the ground like a snake. Fire seems to issue from the eyes of Max, and only after a number of heavy blows upon the head, administered by the Yankee, he releases the limp body. The two companions try to revive the Mexican.

Max stands rigid, his eyes looking into the distance, absent-minded, in search, as it may be, of his own lost soul that is weeping over his sudden transformation from man to beast. The pair of soldiers succeed in getting their mate back to consciousness, and they lead him away, leaving the so sadly awakened dreamer to his waking thoughts of fighting actuality.

Reaction sets in. From this day on the change in Max brings forth ever more pronounced symptoms. The motions of his body become quick and wiry; compressed are his lips, and piercing his lighting looks. His assistants in the field kitchen begin to get a holy fear of his lean body. When one of them gives him an order, enforced by a poke in the ribs, he nearly pays for it with his life, only saved by a close margin by his companions, who have to tear the fingers of Max from his throat.

* * *

After that incident they steer clear of him, avoiding his very sight, and in the end Max is put in his true place, in the trench, with rifle and bayonet.

And the killing becomes to him a matter of fact like the profession of a hangman. A deep furrow is engraved in his forehead; blackened are his hollow cheeks; and the ribs protruding under the discolored skin, heave and sink with the breath that gives death, not life.

To the left of him is the Irishman, whom we recognize again,—a head taller than Max, but a weaker specimen of death-dealing flesh-and-blood machinery. The Irishman quaffs draughts of new life by sidelong glances upon the alert, lithe body of Max, which is restless like mercury. The hands of his companion seem to him death-dealing electrodes.

At the right side of Max cringes and whimpers a coward, shrinking, though more under the looks of contempt of Max than of fear of the enemy. When that look lashes his puny soul, he grips his rifle feverishly, muttering under his breath: "Pshagreff!"

A piece of shrapnell strikes the Irishman in the arm, tearing off the sleeve, and causing a nasty flesh-wound,—a thing to frighten the strongest. But when he meets the beast-look of Max, he grabs his rifle again, grits his teeth, and mutters: "Devil!—He is a Devil. Oh, he is Death itself—begorrah.—I'll be bleeding to death!" A glancing bullet plows through his scalp, tearing off his hat, and another pierces his fore-

head. He presses a hand to his head and crumbles to the ground.

The coward on the other side of Max tries to sneak away, when he sees the shock-lines of the enemy approach, but Max finishes him like one would a specimen of loathsome vermin.

"Oh!—me mother!" groans the son of Erin. Max turns around and looks down upon his comrade of arms. Again the words, "Me mother!" The mother-call reaches out for him with an invisible hand, stirring up in its deepest the half-dead heart. "Mother!" comes from his slowly moving lips, an echo to the dying man's exclamation. "Mother,"—it seems to ring all about him. Weaker and weaker becomes the voice of the wounded man as he repeats: "Mother!—oh, Jesus!—Mother!" Max kneels down, lifts the head of his companion upon his knee, and puts the canteen with water to the lips of the dying man, who fixes his puzzled, quiet eyes upon his friend, the lips still muttering inaudibly.

Under this glance the chill glacier-ice over the heart of Max melts, and the hard lines of his face soften. The sallow drawn face and the ribs of the naked breast, hitherto symbols of death, relax, and become milder in outline and expression. The poet's heart, which once upon a time was capable to feel, to suffer, and to forgive, begins to unfold. In his eyes shimmers again the deep, mystical transparency of yore. The rigidly drawn tenseness of his lips unbends. The harsh, protruding cheek-bones, and the face of deathly pallor lose their aspect of repulsing horror, yea, become attractive.

There again an expiring whisper: "Mother!" and Max awakens to his own self, with an unsteady hand passing over his head, removing an invisible heavy burden. The son of the Emerald Isle breathes his last, his head slipping from the knee of Max, who takes no notice, but sits still, shaken to his innermost being by a deep emotion. With the mild eyes of a child he looks before him—a man re-born under the mother-call of Death. The battlefield disappears from his vision; in its place he views a green meadow with fragrant flowers; and instead of the whistling bullets and shrieking of shrapnel, the sweet perfume of violets and roses, and the songs of birds ring in his senses. He feels being absorbed by a light, delicious pain. "Mother?" it comes from his lips. "Mother, where are you? !!" And he bursts into tears.

A head appears over the rampart of the trench,—a body follows; and a bayonet is poised over the heart of Max. But something seems to hold back the messenger of death. It is our friend Demuth, in the service of his fatherland. Max raises his head. "For God's sake!—You!—Max! Donnerwetter!" With these words the carpenter drops his rifle, and sinks upon his knees in front of his friend. As he sees Max weeping he can not hold back his own tears. "I am tired of killing, Max,—tired, heart and soul!"—and drops his head upon the knees of Max, whose hands sink down upon him like a blessing.

Not far from them a shrapnel explodes; the barrage comes

closer all the time. The second shell shrieks just past them like a fiend of hell. The third brings destruction with a deafening roar. A pillar of smoke arises, mingled with parts of human bodies—the work of Death, ruthless, and respecting none.

The dense smoke-clouds of death are dispelled and we take a deeper look upon what, only a moment before, was a trench of the living, and is now but a long-stretched grave of the dead and maimed. A few feet distant from the spot of the previous scene we see Max again, but hardly we recognize him. The power of annihilation have merely played with him. As delicately as only they can, in their grim whims of humor, they have lifted him and carried him a brief distance. And to make sure of the plaything of their pranks, they have half buried him in the ground.

He groans heavily, suffering from a wound below his heart, and painfully he tries to move, yet with small success. These efforts serve only to tire him out more, and with the little strength left he reaches with the one free hand under his torn shirt to pull out hands full of blood-soaked earth from over his heart.

With a lost expression he looks around, knits his brow in attempts of thought, and all his efforts are bent upon discovering some traces of his two companions; but in vain. His glances meet only the sears and wounds of lacerated Mother Earth. "And I live!" he mutters with a hushed voice. "I live yet?" The day is spent, and Death is upon his wing to pass him by over the field of desolation, leaving him to the shadows of the night, and to pains past human endurance.

* * *

Let us take a glance into a field hospital. Do you see the hero of the glorious battle? A medal is pinned to the lapel of the shirt, a shirt which, in its whiteness, is mocked by the pallor of the thin face of the sufferer. And since Max is a patriotic hero, decorated with a medal, he has a special room all to himself.

And she, the sympathetic nurse, though rather somewhat stout, assists him in everything, to the best of her ability. The very best she can do for him is to write from his dictation. Intelligently, and with kindness, her eyes rest upon the helpless literary man. His flow of words is caught quick by her trained ears, and the pencil in her hands keeps up with it upon the paper. As long as the rhythm of the words slips from his lips, she is under his compelling influence. But the moment the stream is spent, she again becomes conscious of the separateness of their beings, and leaves him because from experience she knows already what will follow.

In moody meditation he remains seated, alone, propped up in his pillow-grave, gazes before him, and mutters to himself unceasingly the same set of words: "I will tell everything, everything, the whole truth and nothing but the truth!" Again and again he repeats the sentence, querulously, like a schoolboy threatening to squeal on his pals. The monoto-

nious sound of the phrase seems to fill him with a kind of an intoxication. Then pain manifests itself in his drawn features. But a stream of soothing tears relieves the tension of his emotions, and faster, ever faster the hot drops trickle down his pallid cheeks.

The nurse knows also that after the tears he becomes hard, like turned into a stone; withering, and mercilessly cutting, becomes his look, and to her seemingly meaningless words issue from his lips as follows, in a heart-rending sing-song: "Winds of madness, leaves of autumn—laws of nature—from the cradle to the grave." When at last the lips close, the eyes seem to take up, and continue, the unfinished sentences. If you can not stand his penetrating gaze of utter despair, then turn away. But never in your life will you be able to forget these eyes.

* * *

Half naked are the trees of Central Park, their despoiled twigs and branches are combed by the winds of autumn; under that chilling caress they vision the not far-distant winter, and they tremble and rub against each other with a crackling and groaning sound, in fear of the approach of death.

The sun has passed the zenith and casts his slanting rays upon the riot of death-colors of trees and shrubs, from yellow gold to brown, from blood-red to deep purple, and as the sun-rays kiss the doomed leaves these begin to fall, each little leaf of life becoming the plaything of mad winds, driven hither and thither, restless, aimless, united and, again, torn asunder in the life-eddies. The wind gusts, tired of their game, blow the indiscriminately gathered spoils into little mounds, and try their strength upon the door and windows of the Museum of Art, there being no one to harrass upon the forlorn empty benches of the park.

A dark shape glides slowly through the halls of sculpture of the building, led by an invisible hand and thus drawn into the still world of creations. As the form approaches we see it is Tannenbaum with the orphan upon his arm. He stops short at a group of marvelous lifelikeness representing a tall man on sandals, a child on the left arms, a bundle in his right hand, gazing into the distance:—"The Eternally Wandering Jew." The Jewish poet, the little orphan with the questioning sad eyes pressed close to his breast, stands transfixed by a likeness of fate which heretofore he had not grasped. He moves up closer to the masterpiece which seems a replica of his own self; with a trembling timid hand he touches caressingly the statue; his eyes, that have been dry so long, light up, for a brief spell, like gold-winged flies fitting by in the night, and with a sobbing sigh he exclaims: "I!". Then he walks backward to a seat into which he sinks, gazing into the distance visioned by the chiseled eternal wanderer. To his left looms the gigantic cast of Moses, to the right the massive brow of King David by Michel Angelo Buonarotti, silent witness to the soul-tragedy, and with bowed head the old shrunk-en man repeats listlessly the enigmatic syllable: "I!"

Silent men around the museum building walk about, quiet, poised, and heavy, smoking their pipes; their strong arms rhythmically wield the rakes to gather the little mounds of autumn leaves into larger and larger piles, apply a match to them, and reduce the little leaf-lives, dropped helter skelter by the way-side, to ashes. Everywhere in the Park we see the silver-gray or bluish smoke issuing from funeral pyres of burnt offerings of Autumn leaves, and the silent, quiet, poised, and heavy men, who smoke their pipes, whose senses, and souls, seem closed to the symbolism of their toil, in the eternal circle of life and death, with its endless chain of seasons and aimless events. Or are they so silent because their heart tells them that they too are mere autumn-leaves, playthings of the mad winds of life? Who can tell?

* * *

The world-war for democracy, the nightmare of man's civilization, is a thing of the past. The boys have come home and are being paraded through Fifth Avenue, New York, which is packed with seething billows of a humanity worked up to the highest pitch of expression of varied emotions.

A poor Jewish pretzel-woman is caught in the human torrent, and carried along in spite of all her efforts to extricate herself. The pent-up emotions of the festive mass break out in a hurricane of shouts of welcome. The boys themselves are mostly in grim silence,—too vivid are still in their memories the flashlight-pictures of the man-made hell they have escaped, not all of them unscarred. Their thoughts are with those who were their comrades, and who slumber in strange lands, never to return. But the great mass does not see, and does not know, and it shouts its hurrahs with an easy heart.

The pretzel-vending parcel of human driftwood, helplessly carried along by the surging tides of humanity, is infected by the virus of emotionalism and joins the chorus in yiddish: "Hurrah, Hurrah,—may you have strength to live to the measure that I have strength to call out hurrah!" And up her one free hand goes in a racial gesture, as she shrewdly blends enthusiasm with business: "Hurrah!—Nice bretzels; who wants bretzels!" Before she can get her hand down again in the crushing crowd, a couple of street urchins, watching her, and wiggling their way between the legs and squirming bodies of their elders, help themselves to the dainty morsels to a good fill. What do they care for her malediction upon the "goyis!"

Her husband does not fare better. Somebody pushes him from his usual stand on the sidewalk, and the fun begins, because he is not alone but has with him his "limousine," consisting of a baby carriage. Wrapped in the, once upon a time, white rags is not a baby,—that would have fitted well his short white apron, with the penny-bank attached,—but a tin-pot with hot beans, at two cents a bag.

In the eddies and whirlpools of the mightily shouting throng he is being dragged along, utterly helpless, now push-

ing, now dragging his vehicle, and now, again, carried sideways with his treasure on wheels, and in that dilemma he can not make up his mind if he is to shout the welcome, or to praise his wares.

Finally he gives up all illusions of a free will and, drifting along, cleverly combines business with patriotic duty, in a quaint medley: "Hurrah!—hurrah!—Hot beans—two cents a bag—try them before you fry them!—What for why are you pushing me for?" Sly, swift hands reach under the cover of the pot, removing its contents in a jiffy, while the helpless owner raises a dismal wail: "Oi!—Oi!—Gewalt!—stop it—my beans!" And there they go, the whole cart being overturned in the excitement; and then the real fun begins. Too bad!

* * *

While the crowd divides its interest between the final chapter of a gigantic world-tragedy, and the tragic comedy of the just related incident, soldiers are leaving the ranks, dropping out one by one, in silence, on the return march, to join friends or relatives. Let us follow a few.

There is one who shamefacedly approaches his mother, and it is evident from his actions that he wishes he had lost an ear instead of all of his nose, for even his own mother does not recognize him on the spot. At last recognition lights up in her eyes, mingled with an agonized terror. "Sammy, oh my poor Sammy," her heart yearns. And she weeps and laughs all in one, while the boy, bashfully covering his disfigured face with one hand, presses her to his heart with the other arm, joining in her tears with an embarrassed smile. He does not know, as yet, that to his mother's heart he will always be the boy he was before the death-missiles of civilized man singed and seared his features.

Here comes another. A piece of shrapnell has split his under-lip and left a vertical, deep scar, so that when he opens his mouth a merry laugh seems to enliven his face, while when he closes the lips, he seems to cruelly mock those present. His sweetheart reveals her true colors. One glance is sufficient for her to make up her decision never to marry the derelict returned:—to all appearance a hopeless case for any peace-conference. But in condescending self-pity, and to prove that, after all, she is patriotic to the limit, and also to sugar-coat somewhat her incipient faithlessness to the one who had placed duty and loyalty to his native land above love for a woman, she asks him, if he has seen President Wilson—"Isn't he simply grand?"—and what he, personally, thinks concerning the fourteen points. In answer he presses his lips together. Is it a wonder, at the sight of his face, that she thinks he is a fool, and congratulates herself upon her wise decision?

Max also leaves the ranks, pallid still, yet fully recovered, with the medal of valor upon his breast, but no one is there of kith and kin to welcome him. A stranger he is amongst strangers. The loud acclaim of the immense crowd does not

warm up, but rather chills his heart, no human bond tying him to any of the countless human beings, in whose midst fate has thrown him like some flotsam or jetsam. A few sympathetic glances inquiringly follow the youthful, and yet so aged, agile body of the decorated soldier with the aquiline features and the strangely luminous eyes of unutterable sadness. But they pass on to new delights, or new anxiety, as fate might have decreed. Max is not one of them.

Only the mighty trees of Central Park, partly shorn of their autumnal glory, touch a familiar chord in his soul. He would have surrendered himself to memories, had not an elderly lady in deep mourning stepped up to him and searched his features with heart-hungry eyes—with a mother's hope against hope. So penetrating is that mother-look that under its spell Max wakens from his reverie. Their eyes meet for an instant with a subtle mutual understanding of the irretrievable loss of each in life. No, her boy will never come back from the crimson banks of the Marne, and the broken heart of Esther is at rest for ever under the little desert-hillock of far-away California. In agony Max shrinks back and plunges into the crowd as if hunted by avenging furies.

* * *

Dear reader: Picture to yourself the last tableau of the film of life, reeled off before your eyes. You are at the end of a short and narrow, forlorn street in the vast ghetto of the Atlantic metropolis, a chasm only four blocks in length. There, in the eternal twilight of the congested city, is Tannenbaum's abode, and we see him on his way home, leading Esther's little boy by the hand. If you can not recognize him from the rear, with his thread-worn, yet neat, overcoat, take a quick glance at his features. Does he not appear in harmony with the "Gass"? Look upon the gray and time-worn house-fronts. Look upon the roofs,—how richly adorned they are with black patches. Does it not appear to you like a world about to go bankrupt, because we do not pay our debts? And behind the shabby walls seems to be poverty enthroned, as auctioneer, to offer the last shirt to the highest bidder!

But few are the passers-by, stopping for a moment to light a smoke, or to take some snuff, and then be gone again. And what does a soldier want in this neighborhood, who proceeds with unsteady gait, in a little distance back of the old man, undecided if to walk on, or to return whence he came; but unable to shake off the fascination that draws him toward that bent back in front of him, with the little child! Under that spell he is a boy again himself, maltreated, yet full of sympathy with all living things, as of old, when his heart used to go out to the snow-capped, storm-bent, groaning trees of his native land.

The aged Jewish poet is weighted down under the burden of his life that bends his shoulders ever more. Often he feels compelled to stop for a little while, to catch his painful, weary breath, and the thought passes before his mental vision

that he might be reading, perchance, the last page of the book of his life. This indistinct fear urges him to a greater effort to reach the shelter of his abode.. To proceed faster, in his eagerness to get on, he relinquishes the hold on the hand of the little boy, who is left to himself to follow as best he can. But youth's curiosity prompts the child to look about, and open-eyed he stands still, his thumb in his mouth when he sees of a sudden the strange apparition of a soldier in these parts.

Max is strangely interested in the pair before him, halting whenever they stop, and when the old man totters on alone, he smilingly walks up to the boy left behind, interrogating him: "Hello, little fellow! Why don't you keep up with your grandpa?" An unlooked-for answer greets him as follows: "I am tired, mister. Won't you carry me, please?" The soldier gets a liking for the child and rejoins with a smile: "Is that so?—Well, let us try!" In reward the child pats his cheek with a chubby hand, and then hugs him with his downy, warm, little arms. "You are wise alrighnt," exclaims the life-intoxicated man in khaki, "but you have to pay me just the same with a bushel of kisses, while you are at it!"

The old man's life-tired heart will not go on as it should. With belabored breathing Tannenbaum is forced to interrupt his anxious progress. Dizziness fills his head, and he must needs close his eyes, with the mumbled plaint: "Downhill it is still harder!" Max catches up with him, his eyes a-sparkle over the bargain concluded with the child that seems to melt the pack-ice of destiny over his heart as by a golden sunshine. But a few steps farther he stops in his tracks, and gazes—slowly letting the boy to the ground, still gazing—unwilling to believe the evidence of his own eyes.

"Yes, still harder," mumbles forlorn the silver-haired poet. "I feel the clouds passing from under me,—they pass so swift!" And his body sways from side to side, and to and fro, like a reed weighted with dew drops. With a flash recognition comes to Max, and full of astonishment he stares upon the wavering body, whose eyes seem unwilling to open to look any longer upon life's journey and travail. In a mighty effort Max arouses himself to rush to assistance with the despairing cry: "Tannenbaum!" "Yes," echoes dimly a faint voice, already from the shores of another land, and what was once the Jewish poet sinks limp into his outstretched arms.

In that moment Max lives through an eternity. He wants to gather his child to his heart, but the crumpled body of Tannenbaum forbids it. Oh! the pain of it all! He speaks to the broken clay in endearing terms, but no answer comes to his entreaties, while the child's intuitive wisdom illuminates the tiny face with a bitter grief for one lost, mingled with an ocean of joy, flooding the warm little heart with happiness over one found at last.

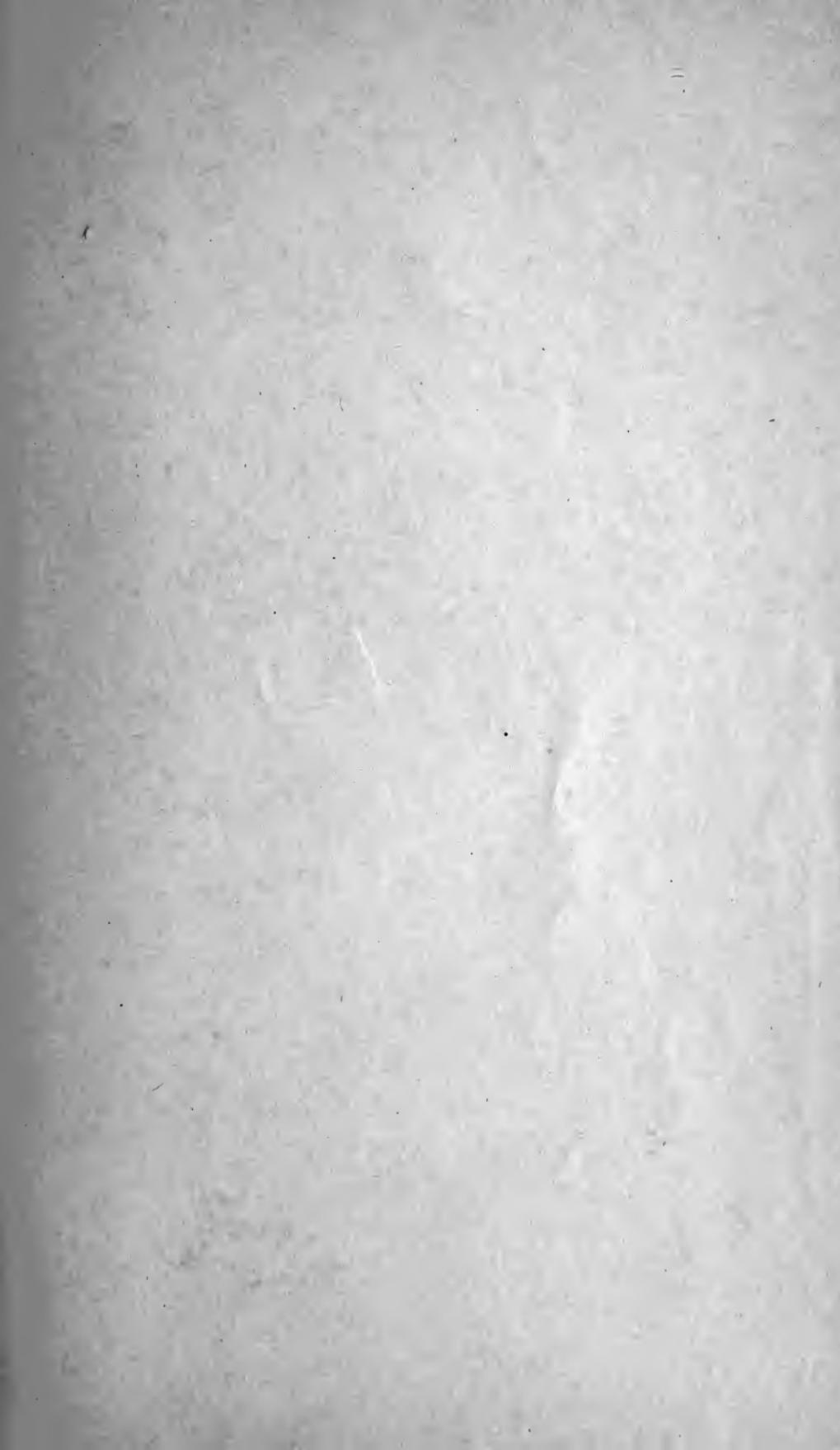
Max gently lifts up the body of the old man and calls out to the child: "Go ahead, boy, you belong to the Future,—show me the way. The Present holds me yet, with not yet

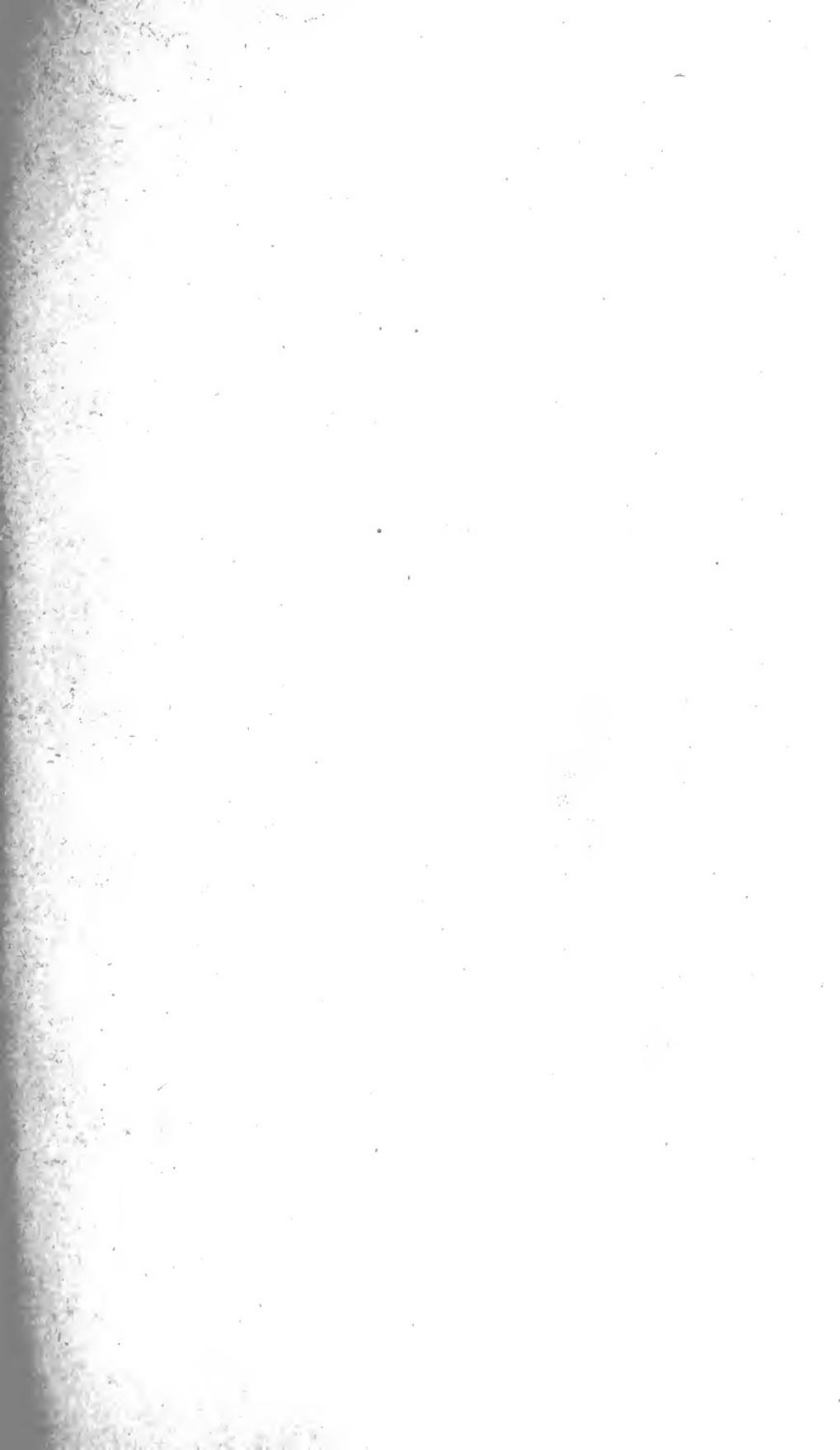
accomplished tasks, and a duty I have to fulfill towards the clay-shell that held the Past."

Lo, there is a the replica again of the statuary in the museum; the eternal wanderer of Israel, stepping manfully in the Present, the burden of the dead Past upon his shoulders, and the Future leading him by the hand, pointing with the chubby little hand of undying hope into the distance. And thus we lose sight of them in the gray shadows of the Gass of the Ghetto. Will their pilgrimage through the ages ever end? We wonder!







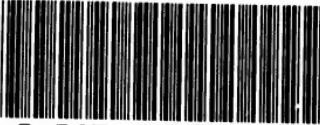


The author has in preparation for print in the not distant future another story entitled:

ART and LIFE

A copyrighted synopsis of that story from the pen of Mrs. Frances Pemberton Spencer, which appeared in the Scenario Bulletin Review of Los Angeles of July 1921, under the title: ETERNAL ART.

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